



"And the LORD was with Judah; and he

drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had **chariots of iron**." — Judges 1:19

## IRON CHARIOTS

the counter-apologetics wiki

### Arguments for the existence of god

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## Anthropic principle

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For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*\*Anthropic principle\*\*\*](#)

The **anthropic principle** simply states that there are several universal constants and that these constants take on their values according to the requirement that carbon based life can evolve at some point during the universe's history. The universe must be old enough that this has already occurred.

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## Background information

Perhaps rather than being an argument on its own, apologists use the anthropic principle (or more precisely a straw man version of it) to further bolster the [fine-tuning argument](#) and [argument from design](#).

[Brandon Carter](#), the British Cosmologist who proposed this principle in 1976, has gone further by stating that "the Universe *must* have those properties which allow life to develop within it at some stage in its history."

## Argument

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### Argument overview

Astronomer and Minister [Hugh Ross](#) counts more than 100 constants, at a probability of about 1 chance in  $10^{138}$  against their lining up as they have in our universe. The probability that each of these constants has lined up in a "life friendly" way, without the intervention of an outside intelligence, is astronomically small. With such a low probability of a "life friendly" universe, the only reasonable explanation for our existence is that God has "fine tuned" these attributes specifically to accommodate human life.

There are several versions of the anthropic principle. The two major variations being: "strong" and "weak". The strong anthropic principle (SAP) can also be divided into two other variations, "participatory" and "final".

### Weak anthropic principle (WAP)

The weak anthropic principle states that in a universe that is large or infinite in space and/or in time, the conditions necessary for the development of intelligent life will be met only in certain regions that are limited in space and time. The intelligent beings in these regions should therefore not be surprised if they observe that their locality in the universe satisfies the conditions that are necessary for their existence." (Steven Hawking. *A Brief History of Time*)

### Strong anthropic principle (SAP)

This form states that a universe "must have those properties which allow life to develop within it at some stage of its history." (John Barrow and Frank Tipler, The Anthropic Cosmological Principle)

### Participatory anthropic principle (PAP)

This form states that a universe cannot come into being without observers (Barrow and Tipler). The implication is that these observers must be sentient.

### Final anthropic principle (FAP)

This form states that intelligences must evolve within a universe and that once evolved will not die out.

The FAP has also been dubbed "the Completely Ridiculous Anthropic Principle (CRAP)" by author and skeptic [Martin Gardner](#).

## Syllogism

p1. There is some kind of special significance to human life and or the human frame of reference.

p2. From the human frame of reference we seem to observe a number of 'constants' that are necessary for human life to be sustained

a. Goldilocks zone

b. Oxygen level

c. Strength of gravity fields

d. Etc

p3. It is far too improbable for all the necessary 'constants' to occur by chance

c1. Therefore the universe was specifically made this way

c2. Therefore God

## Counter arguments

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### Straw man argument

The proper scientific usage of the anthropic principle in physics and cosmology, is a cautionary statement *against* making unwarranted assumptions based on the observer's frame of reference. Directly it refers to the tautology that the universe must be able to support life because we are here to observe this fact. Or more broadly, that anything we do observe in the universe must necessarily be skewed by our limited frame of reference from within the very system we are trying to observe.

One of the rules that defines over arching laws of nature is that they cannot be frame dependent. Einstein's law of relativity must hold true on the other side of the galaxy, just as it does here; otherwise it cannot be called a true law of nature.

An example of the anthropic principle in action would be that we are able to observe red shift in distant galaxies. This means that they are all moving away from us. A credulous or egocentric observer might therefore conclude we are at the center of the universe. This is an unwarranted assumption. If however the universe were expanding uniformly (rather than simply escaping from a single point) then another observer would see the same thing from any other position of observation within the universe. On closer inspection we see that this is indeed the case; the red shift of the galaxies linearly increases with the distance the galaxy is from us. It appears the galaxies are all moving away from *us*, but in fact they are all really moving away from *each other*.

The theistic usage of the term *anthropic principle* is almost diametrically opposed to its proper scientific usage. Rather than acting as a cautionary statement against weighting our conclusions based on our frame of reference, it argues that because of our observable frame of reference there must be a god.

## False premise p1: Frames of reference

The entire argument hinges on the human frame of reference being statistically significant. There is, however, no evidence to support this premise. The only significance to our personal existence or frame of reference is the significance that we choose to grant it post hoc.

The chances of getting a royal flush (A,K,Q,J,10, all in the same suit: ♠,♥,♣,or ♦) in poker is 649,740 to 1. It is interesting to note, however, that there are four suits and therefore, four possible royal flushes in a deck of cards. That means that the chances of getting any specific random poker hand of five cards (K♥ J♣ 8♣ 7♦ 3♠) is actually four times more unlikely than getting a royal flush. However, we simply do not grant any statistical significance to this hand in the game's rules.

The fundamental core of this argument is a case of the theist being dealt a random poker hand, and then proclaiming after the fact, "Wow! The chances of me getting this specific hand of cards is 2,598,960 to 1. It must have been divine intervention."

## False premise p2: Constants

The second false premise is related to the so-called *constants*. It is entirely possible that there are factors that make the possibilities of life in the universe statistically improbable, but reviewing the list of given reasons at some [apologetics sites](#), their importance in the probability equation is questionable at best.

Examples:

- Goldilocks Zone – Proponents of the argument claim that earth had to be exactly a certain distance from the sun to seed life. This is not necessarily the case. [1] Some forms of bacteria can thrive in conditions ranging from -5°C ice sheets to 400°C underwater volcanic vents; pressures up to 400 bar; salt concentrations up to 10 times higher than regular sea water. The reason we see the life we do is because it has evolved to fit the environment. If a planet was further away from, or closer to the sun, it doesn't mean life couldn't exist, just that it would be different to the life we observe now. Additionally, it is possible that our solar system is a fairly typical system. That when a star system forms it does so under strict physical laws. A gas cloud of a certain size will form a certain sized star, with certain sized planets, at certain orbital distances. Similar to the way Plateau-Rayleigh instability causes a droplet of water followed by several smaller after drops at certain distances due to the water's surface tension versus gravitational pull.
- Oxygen Levels – The oxygen level within earth's atmosphere fluctuates. As there is more plant life the oxygen levels rise, the carbon dioxide level inversely goes

down. When this happens plants have less to live on and some of those plants die off. When this happens the oxygen level goes back down and the carbon dioxide level goes up again allowing the plants to reproduce more and regain vitality. This is called a dynamic equilibrium. The system balances itself. It is also worth mentioning that some animals require more oxygen and others less. The level of oxygen is not a constant. And the current level of oxygen being fixed, isn't necessary for life to exist, just extremely fragile life that has evolved within the current environment. Furthermore it is worth noting that on the [website referenced](#), carbon dioxide level is listed as a separate 'constant' rather than a counterpoint to oxygen in a further attempt to try and make the universe appear even more complicated than it really is.

- Gravity Fields – Even something as apparently fixed and transcendental as the strength of gravity is not necessarily a set constant. Recent unified field theories in physics and cosmology propose that at high enough energies, the strong nuclear, weak nuclear, electromagnetic and gravity forces, all converge to become a single unified force. As the universe cooled after the big bang and the four forces separated, mass and energy collapsed to a state where the outward push of the nuclear forces was in a stable equilibrium with the inward pull of gravity. We even observe some cases where one of the forces fails, such as in white dwarf or neutron stars, and the matter and energy compress further under the force of gravity until once again the remaining forces are in equilibrium. The universe is not dependent on the current strength of gravity being fixed.

### **False premise p3. Statistical probability**

A royal flush is considered statistically significant. It has a probability of 649,740 to 1, which whilst being improbable means if you play 649,740 hands of poker, you should statistically get a royal flush at some point. Given the flaws with the first 2 premises that:

p1. The only statistical significance to human life or the human frame of reference is what we arbitrarily apply to it post hoc

p2. That the alignment of the necessary 'constants' is far less improbable than apologists would like to argue they are

Although the conditions for life similar to that on earth may still be improbable, given that there are 400 billion stars in our milky way galaxy, and that there are 100 billion galaxies in the observable universe, that is a staggering number of 'poker hands' the universe has to play with. That doesn't even take into account hypothetical theories about multiverses or an oscillating big bang/big crunch universe. Of course the proper usage of the anthropic principle tells us that while it may be statistically improbable, its isn't statistically impossible given that we

have at least one example of life in the universe occurring. A further fallacy of the anthropic principle is the assumption that any of the physical constants of our universe can be changed independently of all other constants and laws. How do we know that altering one constant, assuming that this could, in fact, be done, wouldn't change all of the other natural properties of the system undermining the basic assumption of the anthropic principle.

## **Affirming the consequent**

Arguments from the anthropic principle commit the fallacy of placing the consequent ahead of the antecedent, or [affirming the consequent](#). In plain English, it means the tail is wagging the dog. The features of humanity have evolved as a result of our environment, rather than our environment being tailored to suit us.

[Douglas Adams](#) c. 1998:

*"Imagine a puddle waking up one morning and thinking, 'This is an interesting world I find myself in, an interesting hole I find myself in, fits me rather neatly, doesn't it? In fact it fits me staggeringly well, must have been made to have me in it!' This is such a powerful idea that as the sun rises in the sky and the air heats up and as, gradually, the puddle gets smaller and smaller, it's still frantically hanging on to the notion that everything's going to be alright, because this world was meant to have him in it, was built to have him in it; so the moment he disappears catches him rather by surprise. I think this may be something we need to be on the watch out for."*

The SAP and its variants assume that human observers are required for the existence of the universe. This is a common misrepresentation of the "Copenhagen interpretation" of quantum mechanics. It is taken from the mental experiment called Schrödinger's cat. A cat is placed in a sealed box into which poison will be pumped when the nucleus of a certain atom decays. According to the Copenhagen interpretation, the atom exists as both decayed and undecayed (superpositioned) until a measurement is made. Since the atom must exist in this superpositioned state, the cat must exist in the same state until the box is opened. Note that the cat does not cease to exist, nor does the atom's nucleus. They simply exist in an unobserved state. The 'wave forms' that represent the experiment's possibilities have not collapsed into a single 'choice'. If we accept the most mystical interpretation of quantum mechanics, the universe would still exist without human intelligence. It would simply exist in an unobserved state.

## **Other counter arguments**

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- Because we don't know of other universes with different constants, attempting to list the constants that can somehow vary is little more than speculation. There is no reason to assume that any "constant" can be changed. Furthermore, assuming it is somehow a knob that can be turned by a god effectively makes the anthropic principle assume its conclusion.
- While the odds of a universe's fundamental constants having a *specific* set of values may be very low, the odds of them having *some* value is 1.0 (100%). It may be that life exists in our universe because it happened to form, by chance, with a set of universal constants that support life. In other words, humanity exists because of a lucky roll of the dice, so to speak.
- It is possible that terrestrial life is not the only form of life possible in our universe. For example, creatures on another planet might pass on their genes via a mechanism other than the DNA double helix. In other words, it is possible that our universe's constants are friendly to a broad variety of life forms, and therefore it is wrong to assume that they have been 'tailored' to suit just humans.
- Similarly, it is possible that the universe's constants could have varied quite a bit, and still allow earth-style life to form. In other words, a broad variety of universes might be friendly to life as we know it. Indeed, if one of the "constants" is the amount of matter in the universe, why would a god choose a value that was clearly much higher than it needed to be to create life?
- The strong, participatory, and final anthropic principles presuppose that life had to exist in our universe. This is an unwarranted assumption. If our universe could not support life, it would not contain life. There is no reason to suppose that our universe was "intended" or "supposed to" contain life.
- The underlying principles of the universe are not known. Without knowing these principles, applying odds to the settings of the Universal constants is disingenuous. A probability analysis with a sample size of one is meaningless. Since we do not know how many 'settings' are possible for each constant, we cannot assign valid odds for different 'settings'.
- It can be shown that the chances of a universe having "life friendly" universal constants, low though they may be, are higher than the chances of the existence of a supernatural creator. As Michael Ikeda



and Bill Jefferys point out in their paper "The Anthropic Principle Does Not Support Supernaturalism" a self referential loop occurs when a supernatural entity is assumed as a creator. Each iteration of the loop decreases the chances of a supernatural entity's involvement in the settings of the universal constant.

- It is unknown whether this is the only iteration of "The Universe". If other universes exist or if this universe has oscillated through a series of Big Bangs and Big Crunches, the universal constants may have been reset many times. Given enough universes and/or Bangs, our "life friendly" settings would inevitably occur.
- Most physicists do not accept the most mystical interpretation of quantum mechanics. Instead they view 'wave form collapse' and 'superpositioning' as an extremely useful and accurate description of poorly understood processes.
- With the SAP, apologists are positing a [God of the gaps](#). The SAP and its variants take as fact what most cosmologists take as speculation. Cosmologists are making highly educated guesses about how the universe works. No-one currently knows how the Universe started or what underpins it. No-one even knows IF the universe started, or if it has always existed. This gap in our knowledge may provide a place for a god to exist, but humankind has examined other holes into which God was supposed to have climbed. In each case we have found nothing there but nature. It is a good bet that this gap houses fascinating things, but no God.
- The same argument can be applied to many entities within our universe, such as bacteria, black holes, or spaghetti bolognese. For instance: we seem to observe a number of "constants" that are necessary for black holes to be formed and sustained. It is far too improbable for all the necessary "constants" to occur by chance. Therefore, the universe was specifically made this way so that black holes could exist.

## Additional notes

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Notwithstanding the obvious fact that the universe really isn't very congenial towards life, as 99.999% of the observed universe is uninhabitable, Vic Stenger in his book *God: The failed hypothesis*, quotes a private communication with Martin Wagner in which he points out that:

*"In fact, the whole argument from fine-tuning ultimately makes no sense. As my friend Martin Wagner notes, all physical parameters are irrelevant to an*

*omnipotent God. 'he could have created us to live in a hard vacuum if he wanted.'"*

## Links

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### See also

- [Fine tuning argument](#)
- [Argument from comprehensibility](#)
- [Habitable zone](#)
- [Straw man](#)
- [Statistical significance](#)
- [Affirming the consequent](#)

### External links

- [Anthropic Principle: The Design Is In The Details](#) – Apologist POV
- [The anthropic principle and the big bang: natural or supernatural?](#) - Skeptical POV
- [The Anthropic Principle Does Not Support Supernaturalism](#) – Skeptical POV
- [http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/quentin\\_smith/hawking.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/quentin_smith/hawking.html)

### Reference

- [Wikipedia:Anthropic principle](#) – Wikipedia article
- [Wikipedia:Schrödinger's cat](#) - Erwin Schrödinger's thought experiment regarding quantum indeterminacy.
- [Wikipedia:Copenhagen interpretation](#) – Key feature of quantum mechanics regarding particles described by wave function.
- [Wikipedia:Unified field theory](#) – Theory regarding the relationship between the 4 main forces in the universe.

# Natural-law argument



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Natural-law argument](#)

The **natural-law argument** states that because there are consistent and predictable natural [laws](#) in the [universe](#), there must be a law-giver who set those laws in motion. That law-giver is assumed to be [God](#).

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## Argument

### Syllogism

p1. There are natural laws which govern the universe

p2. All laws have a law giver

c1. That law giver is God

### Counter arguments

#### False premise p1: Natural laws

This argument relies on [equivocation](#) between two meanings of the word "law".

Legislative laws, such as "Do not murder" or "No littering" are *prescriptive*: they are established to demarcate acceptable and unacceptable behavior. If a person breaks such a law, he or she has committed a crime, and may be subject to punishment.

Natural laws, on the other hand, are *descriptive*: they are human concepts that describe how some aspect of the universe behaves. For instance, Newton's law of motion  $\mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{a}$  describes how solid objects behave when acted upon by a force. If a

person or object breaks a physical law, then it is the law that is in error, since it obviously does not adequately describe what it seeks to describe. However, there are natural laws that are at odds with one another and are still taken to be true because there is a clear and consistent pattern. For example, entities governed by the laws of [quantum mechanics](#) do not follow the same thermodynamic laws that govern the macro universe.

[Bertrand Russell](#):

*"We now find that a great many things we thought were Natural Laws are really human conventions. You know that even in the remotest depth of stellar space there are still three feet to a yard. That is, no doubt, a very remarkable fact, but you would hardly call it a law of nature."*

This is peripherally related to the [Transcendental argument](#) for god, in that it heavily confuses a conceptual abstraction with concrete reality.

## **False premise p2: The law giver**

The laws in question are descriptive abstractions of what the universe does, not prescriptive legislations about what the universe can do. As such they do not require a law giver, but as long as a law giver is being asserted, it opens up the question of where god got his laws. This opens up a paradox somewhat similar to the [euthyphro dilemma](#).

[Bertrand Russell](#):

*"Why did God issue just those natural laws and no others? If you say that he did it simply from his own good pleasure, and without any reason, you then find that there is something which is not subject to law, and so your train of natural law is interrupted. If you say, as more orthodox theologians do, that in all the laws which God issues he had a reason for giving those laws rather than others -- the reason, of course, being to create the best universe, although you would never think it to look at it -- if there was a reason for the laws which God gave, then God himself was subject to law, and therefore you do not get any advantage by introducing God as an intermediary."*

## **Broken compass c1: Which god?**

Main Article: [Which god?](#)

The argument is an [argument from ignorance](#), [god of the gaps](#) and a [broken compass argument](#). The origin of natural laws may have some unknown cause that is not even be divine!

Even if we grant the false premises that there are prescriptive natural laws, and by extension the existence of a lawgiver god, it does not

follow that that god is the [one the apologist has in mind](#), or even that there is only one god involved. It could just as likely be the [Flying Spaghetti Monster](#), purple space pixies, [Santa Claus](#), or invisible pink unicorns, as it could be [Yahweh](#).

## Links

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### See Also

- [Equivocation](#)
- [Reification](#)
- [Transcendental argument](#)
- [Euthyphro dilemma](#)
- [Special pleading](#)

### External Links

- [God & Natural Law](#) – Article by Jason Lisle PhD on, Answers In Genesis.

### Reference

- [Wikipedia:Natural law](#) – Wikipedia article on true natural law
- [Wikipedia:Legislation](#) – Wikipedia article on legislative law
- [Wikipedia:Natural-law argument](#) – Wikipedia article on the Natural-law argument for god
- [Wikipedia:Deductive reasoning](#) - Wikipedia article on deductive reasoning and logical validity

# Pascal's Wager



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*Pascal's Wager\*](#)



The argument was first formerly proposed by Blaise Pascal



A medieval Christian artist's conception of Hell.

**Pascal's Wager** is the [argument](#) that states that you should [believe](#) in [God](#) even if there is a strong chance that he might not be real, because the penalty for not believing, namely going to [hell](#), is so undesirable that it is more prudent to take your chances with belief.

A crude form of Pascal's wager is based on [avoidance of hell](#), which relies on an [emotional appeal](#).

*"And that they [in heaven] will live a very happy life without sickness, pain, sadness, or death; God will be pleased with them; and they will live there forever. So after this, how can a wise person risk losing all these pleasures?! [\[1\]](#)"*

The [argument from pragmatism](#) builds on Pascal's wager in an attempt to shift the [burden of proof](#).

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## Background information

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Based on simple [probability](#) theory, the argument was first formally put forth by [Blaise Pascal](#), a 17th-century philosopher and mathematician. The concept of the wager derives from the *Pensées*, a collection of Pascal's thought forged into a literary work. This line of argument forms a response to another proof of God known as Cartesian Thought. Pascal believed that Descartes's argument created a false notion of absolute certainty, which contradicts the concept of faith or belief. Pascal critiques the Cartesian doubt, by implementing no absolute certainty in God's existence. Rather one must believe in God from a point of faith, without assurance. Thus why the term 'wager' was coined.

This is one of the most common arguments presented for God that atheists commonly encounter in the form of the question, "What if you're wrong?"

## Apologetics

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### Overview

God might or might not exist. It is a gamble whether you believe in him or not. As with any gamble, we should consider the [odds](#).

Pascal described the pay-off of this gamble as follows: If God does not exist, then you neither gain nor lose anything from belief or disbelief. In either case, you just die and that is the end. However, if you choose to believe in God, and you are right, then the reward is infinite: eternal bliss in heaven. On the other hand, if you choose not to believe in God, and you are wrong, then your pay-off is negative infinity: eternal suffering in hell.

To summarize:



Table of Payoffs	Believe in God	Don't believe in God
God doesn't exist	0	0
God exists	$+\infty$ (heaven)	$-\infty$ (hell)

Since the chance of God existing is unknown, but the pay-off/punishment scheme is infinitely in favor of believing in God, you should believe just in case he exists. That is the safe bet, per Pascal.

## Syllogism

- p1. Believers and non believers alike, agree that payoff is good, punishment is bad.
- p2. if God is real, then you receive infinite punishment for disbelief or infinite pay-off for belief
  - a. if you believe, then you go to heaven for eternity.
  - b. if you do not believe, then you go to hell for eternity.
- p3. if God is not real, then you really neither lose nor gain anything either way.
  - a. if you believe falsely that God does exist, then you have not really lost anything.
  - b. if you do not believe and it turns out God does not exist, then you do not really gain anything.
- c1. Therefore, even if there is strong evidence against God, it is still better to believe.
  - a. the pay-off for believing if there is a God is infinitely better than the benefit for not believing if there is no god.
  - b. the punishment for not believing if there is a God is infinitely worse than the loss caused by believing falsely that there is a God.

## Counter-arguments

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### Begging the question

Pascal's wager commits the fallacy of begging the question, by assuming in its premises, certain characteristics about the very god the argument is intended to prove.

Rather than the typical Christian god, what if we hypothesize the possibility of [a god who rewards skeptical thinking unbelievers](#) and punishes credulous believers? Such a god would be consistent with the fall-back response of theologians, "We cannot understand the ways of God," so it is conceivable that such a god would want to reward atheists. This god would not need to be malevolent, merely inactive (e.g., Eru Ilúvatar of J. R. R.

Tolkien's legendarium or Ao of the Forgotten Realms Pantheon). This also mirrors deism with regards to creation, and wanting to reward those who take a rational, logical, reasonable, and or skeptical approach to their beliefs.

The new table including a [Maltgeist](#) god may look like this:

Table of Payoffs	Believe in God	Don't believe in God
God doesn't exist	0	0
Legalistic religious god exists	$+\infty$ (heaven)	$-\infty$ (hell)
Anti-conventional god exists	$-\infty$ (hell)	$+\infty$ (heaven)

The mere possibility of such a god makes the expected outcomes for each column undefined, but more importantly, equal.

If you can accept Pascal's Wager as a realistic reason to believe, that leads you to a point where you have no choice but to believe just about everything on the same grounds.

Lacking specific evidence about the nature of the true religious faith, there are an infinite number of possible requirements for going to heaven and avoiding hell. Maybe only those who collect stamps go to heaven. Maybe you have to [donate](#) \$10 a week to Iron Chariots for life. Why quibble about a few measly dollars if it will save you from eternal hellfire?

## Belief is not rewards-based

The argument relies, to a certain degree, on the belief being genuine, and not simply feigned. Especially in the case of the Christian god, who rewards based not on works, but on grace (or so they say). People do not, generally, form their beliefs based on the rewards, but rather on the perceived probability of the truth of their beliefs. What happens with Pascal's wager, is that people will change their perceived probabilities, consciously or not, in order that they might think that they will reap the benefits of doing so.

## Non-zero cost of belief

Main Article: [Religion is harmful](#)



One flaw with Pascal's Wager is that it makes the false assumption that belief costs nothing, and lack of belief provides no benefit. This is not the case.

For one thing, if you go through life believing a lie, that is a bad thing in itself. Besides that, there is more to being a believer than just saying, "Okay, I believe now," and getting on with your life. Serious believers spend a lot of their time in church, and contribute a lot of money as well. There is a reason why some towns have very affluent looking buildings for churches, and why large and elaborate cathedrals are possible: they are funded by folks who donate a tenth of their income throughout their lives to tithing. While some individuals may support the restoration and upkeep of architecturally and/or historically significant buildings, many others will surely view the expenditure as quite a waste if the object of worship is not real.

That is to say nothing of the persecution of other groups that have been instigated in the name of God throughout the ages. Also, in the U.S., churches generally do not have to pay taxes, including property tax. Property tax is what supports, *inter alia* schools, fire protection, and local police; so all the land that churches own provides none of the funding for these activities that would be provided if the same land was owned by most non-religious entities.

When "God did it" becomes an acceptable answer, there is little incentive to continue exploring the question. More damaging, the "success" of this theory encourages one to apply it to other areas of human understanding. Practiced in this manner, theism can actively discourage human knowledge by compelling people to follow an arbitrary code of conduct, rather than one based on logic and reason.

And by the way, religious belief can cost you pork, lobster, cheeseburgers, coffee, cola, physical intimacy, and myriad other pleasures.

## Non-zero payoff on non-belief

The Wager also invokes the assertion that non-belief will not be rewarded in any way. For specific religions such as some Christian sects, it is frowned upon to use alcohol or drugs, or to engage in sex outside of marriage. Now, a non-believer who participates in these events might be seen to be getting rewarded for their disbelief.

## Special pleading

Main Article: [Which god?](#)

Another flaw is that Pascal's Wager makes the assumption that the dichotomy of belief vs. disbelief with respect to one particular god is the only relevant one to consider. In particular, it invokes **special pleading** to apply the argument only to a specific religion's god.

Belief in one god often excludes belief in another. The Wager can be invoked by any religion that claims to reward belief and/or punish disbelief. One is not left with a choice only between belief and disbelief, but a choice between hundreds of different gods. In using the argument, one asks that it be applied only to his particular god, not all the others. This is special pleading.

The conclusion that belief is the safe wager also invokes special pleading in that it relies on the assertion that belief will be rewarded. The Wager could be used, equally validly, by a religion with an unconventional god who punishes faith and rewards conclusions drawn from evidence (the [Atheist's Wager](#)).

## False Dichotomy

The main flaw in this entire argument is assuming that atheism and Christianity (or whatever religion you choose, for that matter) are the only two options.

In reality, there is Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc. so what if the person asking the question of, "What do you have to lose?" is, in fact, wrong in their assessment that the religion they chose is the true religion? You have quite a lot to lose if you are Christian and it turns out that Hinduism is the truth. How do we determine which religion to believe in?

## Appeal to Emotion, Fear

Pascal's Wager fails to provide or describe any hard evidence that hell or god exist, or that non believers will go there. Instead it relies on a fallacy of relevance known as *appeal to emotion* aka *argumentum ad passiones*. The specific emotion targeted here is fear. This argument attempts to scare the recipient into believing the conclusion instead of providing sound logic or evidence that demonstrates that the conclusion is true. Thus the argument is a fallacious scare tactic and therefore is not a sound argument.

## Belief is not a choice

[Belief and disbelief is not a choice](#). You can't make yourself believe the Earth is flat. Similarly you can't just decide to believe in God.

However, there is some disagreement on the validity of this rebuttal. You could [surrender your intellectual honesty](#) and make choices leading to belief becoming more probable.

## Heaven precludes genuine charity

Main Article: [Heaven precludes genuine charity](#)

If there is an omnipotent and perfectly just God and an everlasting reward, there is no reason to act morally except to secure one's own well-being in the afterlife, i.e. loving your brother can only be a rational means to one's own ends not the well-being of one's brother.

## Other counter arguments

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### Atheist's Wager

The [Atheist's Wager](#) is a variant of Pascal's Wager that divides the gods who reward faith and the gods who reward works, finding that it is better to not believe and do good works, for maximum benefit. If one takes into account that rewarding and punishing based on [faith](#) in a deity without [reasonable evidence to believe](#) that a god is evil, then spending your time sucking up to a such a deity is a waste of time. If one discounts the possibility of a god who sends good people to hell for bad reasons, we are left with a completely different payoff table.

Summary:

- If one does not believe in God.

Table of Payoffs	Good Life	Evil Life
Benevolent God Exists	$+\infty$ (heaven)	$-\infty$ (hell)
No God Exists	+finite	-finite

- If one believes in God.

Table of Payoffs	Good Life	Evil Life

<b>Benevolent God Exists</b>	$+\infty$ (heaven)	$-\infty$ (hell)
<b>No God Exists</b>	+finite	-finite

Regardless of one's belief about a benevolent god, the results still favor a good life. Pascal's Wager relies on the judgments of an evil god who sends good people to hell for not believing in him. Moreover, because there are an infinite number of possible such gods, the odds of getting the right answer are 1 in  $\infty$ . Even if a faith-rewarding god existed, believing in an incorrect faith-rewarding god might anger such a god more than not believing in any gods with [good reasons](#).

## Definitions: Belief

Even if one assumes that the wager applies to the Christian god, would he really accept the kind of faith it promotes? The wager does nothing to promote true, deep faith; it promotes merely a fake faith. The person simply pretends to be convinced because he or she is afraid of the punishment for not believing. The wager is simply an attempt to force the person to believe (see [argumentum ad baculum](#)). (Or, perhaps more accurately, it attempts to force the person to *act as if* he or she believes—that is, it serves as an instrument of [social control](#).)

An analogy to this would be a child that professes belief in [Santa Claus](#) out of fear that he or she will not otherwise receive presents, knowing full well that the presents left under the tree are really from his or her parents. Moreover, can we truly choose what we believe? If the reward for believing in the existence of unicorns was a ton of gold, would you believe? Or would you simply pretend to believe?

## Moral implications

There are deep moral implications to Pascal's Wager if the argument is taken to its logical conclusion. It promotes the idea that beliefs are more important than actions — or, more precisely, that [apostasy](#) is the only unforgivable sin.

The central tenet of substitutionary atonement in Christianity means that you can spend your life murdering, raping, killing, waging genocide, etc., and as long as you accept Jesus Christ as lord and savior before you die, you are entitled to an eternity of pleasure in heaven.

On the other hand, a non-believer who spends a good honest life helping others is damned to spend an eternity being tortured in hell despite his or her good deeds.

This is illustrated in the [\*Gun Slinger \(Chick tract\)\*](#).

## **This version of “justice” may be absurd and impractical**

According to the Wager, God punishes people who do not believe. Many people who affirm Pascal's Wager also argue that any act except apostasy and/or atheism can be forgiven. Thus rapists, child molesters, murderers, and terrorists can be forgiven but atheists cannot.

Let us then adopt this standard of justice into our legal system. What would it be like? All child molesters, armed robbers, rapists, serial killers, murderers, terrorists, con-men, et al. would all be released from prison, or would not go there in the first place if they sincerely believe. Instead, all atheists and people who believe in different gods would be arrested and sentenced to life in prison even if they committed no crime (murder, rape, robbery, theft, inter alia). Would it make sense to let rapists and murderers run around free while people are locked up just for not believing? Of course not. This is impractical and absurd. And if this model of justice fails to meet our standards, it does not meet any supposed higher standard. Therefore, God has very low standards of justice or he does not punish people based on their beliefs or lack thereof.

## **Pascal's Wager undermines Christian testimony**

The popularity of Pascal's Wager, whether as a full philosophical argument or simply the fear of hell, gives an excellent reason to disbelieve Christians' testimony in support of their religion. Just as Pascal's Wager points a gun to the head of the skeptic to extract belief, the same gun is pointed at believers' heads. This fundamentally alters their reliability. Likewise, if a (literal) gun is pointed at a hostage, we have an enormous reason to doubt the accuracy when the hostage says something that the terrorists would want said. This is not due to having a general mistrust of the hostage, but simply due to recognizing the incentives.

Consequently, we have every reason to doubt a Christians' claim that they have a relationship with God, for they have every motivation in the world to fabricate such a testimony. We have every reason to disbelieve a Christian scholar claiming to have examined the historical evidence and found the Bible to be true. We have every reason to disbelieve a Christian claiming God has answered their prayers. We have every reason to disbelieve a Christian who claims there was a night and day contrast in their life before being saved. In each of these cases, Pascal's Wager gives them an extremely strong incentive to do whatever they can to fool themselves into prudently believing. In each of these cases, we certainly cannot automatically assume the testimony to be false. (This would be the [Genetic fallacy](#).) But what we can do is automatically conclude it to be very unreliable.

Notably, this counter argument does not hinge on the validity of Pascal's Wager, but only on the extent to which Christians believe it to be valid. And so its conclusion comes with an exception. Pascal's Wager does not invalidate the testimony of someone who disbelieves in heaven and hell or who find the Wager to be completely and utterly without merit. Therefore, if a Christian wishes to share their own testimony without being automatically discounted, they must begin by refuting Pascal's Wager.

## Links

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### See Also

- [Begging the question](#)
- [Special pleading](#)
- [Belief](#)
- [Apostasy](#)

### External links

- [Pascal's Sucker Bet](#) by [Jim Huber](#)
- [Reverse Pascal's Wager](#) at strongatheism.net
- [Why It's Not a "Safer Bet" to Believe In God, or, Why Pascal's Wager Sucks](#) by [Greta Christina](#)
- The Amazing Atheist, [Pascal's Wager Is Garbage](#), 11 Mar 2015

### Reference



- [Wikipedia:Pascal's Wager](#) – Wikipedia article on Pascals wager
- [Wikipedia:Blaise Pascal](#) – Wikipedia article on Blaise Pascal
- [Wikipedia:Appeal to emotion](#) - Wikipedia article on the fallacy of Appeal to Emotion

## Argument from faith

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An **argument from faith** asserts that we can know of the existence of God through faith. Even if it were true, this argument suffers from an obvious limitation: In order to accept the argument, one must already have accepted it.

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## Formal statement

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p1. Faith is a unique method of knowing.

a) Nothing can be known for certain or proven from scratch.

b) Instead we must rely on certain assumptions which we take on faith.

c) Through faith one can know these truths that cannot otherwise be verified.

p2. The existence of God cannot be determined except through faith.

p3. I have faith in God.

c1. God exists.

## Counter-arguments

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### False premise p1a

The premise that nothing can be proven for certain or from scratch can be demonstrated as false when you consider 'I think therefore I am', mathematics and the 3 logical absolutes. You can prove to yourself that your mind exists in some possible form, and that  $2 + 2 = 4$  with absolute certainty. A simple yet sufficient answer to this premise is 'so what?'. Science does not work with absolute certainty on most subjects but is still demonstrably the best way to discover the world. For example, evolution is not proven absolutely, however close it may be.

### Faith is not necessary in any other situation

Most skeptical atheists will probably reject the idea that faith is a way of knowing anything. The things which atheists supposedly assume, such as the reliability of the senses, are in fact generally *not* taken on faith in the same way as religious ideas are. For one, we are constantly bombarded with new evidence regarding the reliability of the senses, as each one confirms the others, and as new experiences prove to be consistent with old ones. The world could be Matrix-like or a dream, but Occam's razor recommends the straightforward explanation, which is that the world is what it appears to be and not an elaborate illusion created by unknown means. Furthermore, it is a practical necessity to live life based on the best information one has, even if it is not absolutely certain.

That said, even this acceptance is not absolute. Most people are willing to accept the possibility that illusions, hallucinations, or dreams may fool their senses, at least from time to time. This is in strong contrast to religious belief. Theists often feel such a strong loyalty towards their beliefs that they are unwilling to even confront the possibility that they might be wrong. What such people call "faith" is most certainly *not* a way of knowing that everyone relies upon.

## **Which God?**

*Main Article:* [Which god?](#)

This argument for the existence of God doesn't specify anything about Him, except to say "He is the God I have faith in." Since many people have different ideas about what God is, they can "prove" to themselves the existence of [Yahweh](#), [Allah](#), [Vishnu](#), or any other deity with this argument. In fact, this is true of virtually every argument for the existence of God that is not explicitly based on a particular scripture.

## **Other ways of knowing God should be possible**

An omnipotent God, or indeed one with any power great enough to make Him worthy of being called God, should be able to manifest in the physical world, do miracles, speak directly to human beings, and many other things. If He did, faith would be unnecessary, and this would seem to be a far more honest and straightforward way for him to interact with mankind. Since these things don't seem to be happening to people nowadays, the fact that we have to rely on faith to believe in him seems to be a reason to *not* believe that he really exists.

## **Faith is not reliable**

This should be obvious to anyone who takes even a brief moment to think about the subject, but sometimes it must be stated aloud. Cult members and even conventionally religious people often have strong convictions that lead them to commit murder or suicide, even when their beliefs are demonstrably false. Different religions contradict one another, yet they are often based on similar degrees of faith. Clearly, having faith in something, however strong, does not make it true, or even lend credibility to the concept. If you say that faith is the only way to determine whether god exists, as stated in p2, then you are out of gas, and more is required.

## **The atheist has no direct access to faith in God**

By definition, no atheist has faith in God, and it is usually not possible to make yourself believe in just anything for just any arbitrary reason (although this is often what theists seem to be demanding when they require an atheist to have faith in God). As a result, no atheist has any way of evaluating this argument except by

noting that other people have faith (in which case she will notice that faith is not a reliable source of knowledge).

In fact, this is a counter-productive argument to use on any kind of atheist. Since it insists that faith is the best or even only way of knowing God, it implies that anyone who cannot have faith should immediately give up on discovering anything about Him. It also encourages theists to give up on ever justifying their own beliefs with solid, objective evidence or reasoning that they could use to shore up their own faith or to convince others.

### **Self-justifying/circular nature of the argument**

This argument is utterly unconvincing to anyone who does not already believe the conclusion. However, it does provide a way for believers to reaffirm their faith through circular reasoning (my faith in God is justified by my faith in God). This makes the argument effectively a defensive tactic, one which has no power to convince, but which becomes unassailable through sheer stubbornness. That is, an atheist confronted with someone who sincerely makes this argument may give up, simply because the theist in question appears totally unreachable through rational discussion.

## Just hit your knees



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[\*\*Can God be found?\*\*](#)



"People find praying helps and have had answers."

The **just hit your knees** argument is that one may come to know god by worshipping him. That is, if a person lives by the teachings of a specific religion, then the benefits of doing so will manifest and the person may know that the religion is therefore true. The expression "just hit your knees" refers to kneeling and praying to God.

*"People find praying helps and have had answers. This week you can find out if someone does listen and care. [\[1\]](#)"*

Based on [Moroni 10:4](#):

*"You can know that [Mormonism](#) is true [by] praying with a sincere heart and with real intent. [\[2\]](#)"*

The argument also is used by [Scientologists](#):

*"one discovers for oneself that the principles of Scientology are true by applying its principles and observing or experiencing the results. [\[3\]](#)"*

In essence, this argument is an appeal to [empiricism](#). The theist is asking the non-believer to engage in an experiment. Try X. If X results in a pleasant outcome, this means that it is a true principle to live by, and therefore this religion is a good one to follow.

A related argument is based on [God answering intercessory prayers](#).

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## Fallacy of the argument

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The fallacy that accompanies this argument is not in the actual theory of the argument, but in practice. When the experiment is carried out, the standard procedure for scientific experiments is not followed. In a scientific experiment, the hypothesis of the experiment must be [falsifiable](#). That is, there must be a null hypothesis.

With this particular experiment, the test hypothesis should be "This religion is true" and the null hypothesis should be "This religion is false". When the experiment is performed, if the desired result is not obtained, a theist may often counter with a reason why the experiment went bad. For example, the experimenter did not have enough faith or did not perform the action to a sufficient standard in order for it to be valid. However, the conclusion in the case of a failed experiment should be that the null hypothesis may actually be the truth.

More generally, the fallacy being committed here is that the conclusion has been reached before the experiment has begun. In religions which promote prayer to a deity or deities, it is often said that every prayer is answered, but that sometimes the answer is "no" or "not yet", and that sometimes the answer is that there is no answer. The fallacy is that any possible outcome is interpreted as a positive result for proving the test hypothesis. There is no conceivable outcome which would imply the null hypothesis--that the religion is not true.

### Scientific studies of prayer

This argument claims that one may come to know God by prayer. They separately claim that petitional prayers are answered ([Matthew 7:7-8](#)). However, analysis of many medical studies have found "no scientifically discernable effect" between prayer and health outcomes. <sup>[4]</sup> If prayers are not answered but believers think they are, they may be mistaken about being able to know God by prayer too.

### Prayer as a path to truth

There is no evidence that prayer leads to any special [foreknowledge](#) or [prophecy](#) that was later verified as true. Also, many religions claim that prayer can authenticate their claims, so it is also a [broken compass argument](#).

There is plenty of evidence that prayer results in [self-deception](#), in which a person convinces themselves that a particular religion is true.

"Self-deception has essentially two components. First, a person forms a belief in violation of his usual standards of [evidence](#) and judgment—what philosophers call [epistemic](#) norms. Second, a desire with content related to the content of the belief causes the deviation from the healthy belief formation process. Because vilification, fear, and desire bring about the religious credence—while that credence is at odds with usual standards of judgment—the process by which religious beliefs come about is one of [self-deception](#). <sup>[5]</sup>"

"Everything we know of the [psychology](#) of religion shows that religiosity is a [self-deception](#), founded on the satisfaction of emotional and spiritual needs of individuals within faith communities <sup>[6]</sup>"

## References

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1. [↑](#) Try praying, advice booklet, published by There Is Hope <sup>[1]</sup>
2. [↑](#) Comment by Courtney on [How can I know Mormonism is true?](#)
3. [↑](#) <sup>[2]</sup>
4. [↑](#) K. Masters, G. Spielmans, J. Goodson "Are there demonstrable effects of distant intercessory prayer? A meta-analytic review." Annals of Behavioral Medicine 2006 Aug;32(1):21-6. <sup>[3]</sup>
5. [↑](#) <sup>[4]</sup>
6. [↑](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

## External links

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- [Efficacy of prayer](#), wikipedia

## Argument from scriptural miracles

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Jesus and the miracle of the feeding of the multitudes

The **argument from biblical miracles** states (more or less) that because a holy book states that people witnessed [miracles](#), people actually did witness miracles. This is often associated with a holy figure such as [Jesus](#) or [Gautama Buddha](#) and is interpreted as evidence of their divine character. It is a form of [argument from miracle testimony](#).

[David Hume](#) criticised belief in miracles based on testimony in his essay [Of Miracles](#) because it is far more likely that the supporting testimony is incorrect.

*"The miracles of Jesus and of the Bible writers are God's stamp of approval on their teaching. This witness testifies that there is a God who possesses supernatural power. And since the Bible writers did miracles, they must have been guided by God's power. Likewise the fact that Jesus did miracles confirms the truthfulness of His claims that He was the Son of God.<sup>[1]</sup>"*

*"Further : some parts of Scripture containing an account of miracles fully sufficient to prove the truth of Christianity, are quoted as genuine, from the age in which they are said to be written, down to the present : and no other parts of them, material in the present question, are omitted to be quoted in such manner as to afford any sort of proof of their not being genuine. <sup>[2]</sup>"*

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## Examples

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### The Bible

[Jesus](#) is said to have performed many miracles, including walking on water, raising from the dead (both others and himself) and healing the sick by touch.

### Qur'an

There are relatively few claims of [Muhammad](#) performing miracles.

- The main example is said to be the [scriptural inerrancy](#) of the [Qur'an](#). The Qur'an is also said to contain [scientific foreknowledge](#), [prophecy](#) and [significant numerical properties](#).<sup>[3]</sup>
- Some interpretations suggest Muhammad split the moon in two. ([Surah 54:1-2](#)) <sup>[4]</sup>

### Buddhism

[Gautama Buddha](#) is recorded as performing many miracles.

## Counter arguments

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### Assuming the Bible is accurate

Main Article: [Argument from scripture](#)

This argument assumes the Bible is true, which is questionable since it is full of false statements, contradictions and written long after the events by non-eye witnesses.

### Redundant argument

1. If the Bible is assumed to be true, the Bible confirms that God exists (e.g. [Genesis 1:1](#)) and the argument is not required.
2. If the Bible is not assumed to be true, the argument is based on an unsupported premise.

### Accepting unreliable testimony from confirmation bias

Main Article: [Outsider test](#)

There is no other evidence of the miracles apart from the holy book that a man walking on water, or feeding 5000 with five loaves and two fishes, or turning water into wine. We are left solely with testimonial attestation of these events.

Imagine taking a number of tribesmen from New Guinea and subjecting them to a magic show. Afterward, it would be possible to collect as many testimonies as desired to the "fact" that, for example, the magician was beheaded by a guillotine, but was re-integrated and completely unharmed several minutes later. These testimonies are **contemporary** (indeed, as contemporary as is possible) and mutually corroborative. Moreover, these witnesses could be questioned to any degree. What would be *our* reaction? Would we take these testimonies as evidence and conclude, based only on them, that the magician *really did* have his head cut off and survive? Or would our incredulity at the likelihood of the event override the testimonies and lead us consider other alternatives (the tribesmen were fooled, they aren't remembering correctly, they're lying, etc.).

Would adding centuries of possible embellishment and distortion make the testimonies more, or less, credible?

The reason we reject their testimony is that we have prior experience that these things do not usually occur. We base our beliefs depending on the weight of the evidence, considering that such things might occur outside our experience and the possibility that the "miracle" witnesses were mistaken. This standard of evidence for miracles was suggested by [John Locke](#) and in [David Hume's](#) essay [Of Miracles](#).

The primary reason such miracle testimony is accepted is that the believers' incredulity are overridden by their [a priori assumption](#) that their god, or Jesus, is [all-powerful](#); the testimonies are worthless without it. This will shift the discussion in that direction.

## Miracles don't prove God exists

*"Now one point that John Lennox made, appealing to the resurrection [of Jesus], was to say if the resurrection is true there is a God. That doesn't follow at all. All that follows at most is there is some supernatural being capable of performing a physical resurrection of a human being. Why should that be omnipotent? Why should that be omniscient? Why should that be perfectly good? It could be a being that is doing it in order to dupe loads of us into having belief in a false religion."<sup>[5]</sup>*

## References

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1. [↑](#) Gospel Way, Testimony #5: Miracles [\[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) Joseph Butler, [The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed](#), 1736
3. [↑](#) [Miracles of the Qur'an](#)
4. [↑](#) [Islam and Miracles](#)
5. [↑](#) [\[2\]](#)

## See also

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- [Argument from miracle testimony](#)
- [Argument from observed miracles](#)
- [Argument from fortunate events](#)

## External links

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- [Miracles of Jesus](#)
- [Miracles of Gautama Buddha](#)
- [Examine Jesus' miracles](#), God is Imaginary

# Would someone die for what they knew was a lie?

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(Redirected from [Would someone die for a lie?](#))

An often used modern [argument](#) for the [truth](#) of the [resurrection](#) of [Jesus](#) is that of [martyrdom](#). The claim is that all of the [apostles](#) would have had first-hand [knowledge](#) as to whether or not Jesus actually returned from the dead and confirmed that he was the [Son of God](#). As they died rather than admit the account was false, this suggests that rather than just [believe](#) that it was true like other martyrs in other faiths, they knew it was true for a fact.

## Counter-apologetics

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- The [premise](#) that people would never "die for a lie" is demonstrably false. People throughout history have, in fact, died for beliefs which turned out to be false, deceptive, poorly understood, and even [mutually exclusive](#). For example, many thousands of Germans died during World War II based on the belief that they were the "master race" and were justified in conquering other nations for "living space". Also during World War II, many Japanese civilians committed suicide rather than being captured by the Americans because of the false belief they would be mistreated. In 1993, 76 people died at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco Texas because they believed their leader, David Koresh was a prophet of god.

Examples like the [September 11th attacks](#) indicate that people are willing to die for their beliefs, and this argument would imply that Islam is just as true as Christianity.

- The Apostles may well have had first hand knowledge but that doesn't lend any credibility to the claim because we don't have first hand knowledge about them or of their claims. Any number of people can have first hand knowledge of Spiderman as stated in his comics, but we still don't believe in Spiderman's authenticity.
- [Implicit](#) in this argument is the idea that the [miracles of Jesus](#) therefore actually happened, which is not supported by the [premise](#) that his apostles would not have died for a lie.

This [conclusion](#) ignores several other possibilities:

1. The apostles strongly believed the stories to be true, but were mistaken:
  - The ones who were killed never actually [witnessed](#) the events take place themselves, but were told by other apostles, whom they trusted.
  - They convinced themselves the stories were true, to the point of actually believing they were, even though what they witnessed directly contradicted them.
  - They remembered the details of the events differently than they witnessed, because the false details were constantly reinforced by everyone they kept company with.
  - They were fooled. They really did see the events, but what they saw was a [trick](#).
2. The apostles did not believe all of the stories, but died for another reason:
  - They believed the literal truth of [John 3:16](#) , and thought they would not die.

- They considered the cause to be just, even though they knew some of the stories were embellished or exaggerated.
  - They were protecting the lives of other people.
  - They would have chosen death rather than be exposed as shameless liars.
  - They were killed because they were public figureheads for the cause, not due to the specific stories they maintained or denied.
  - They were killed without being given opportunity to retract their stories.
  - They stuck to their story to maintain some dignity in their death, as they were going to be killed either way.
  - They intended to become martyrs.
3. The apostles admitted the stories were not true, but the admission was never made public.
  4. They did die protecting the truth, but the stories of those events were later embellished. The "miracles" we now read about are not what they actually saw and died for.
  5. The stories of the apostles' deaths were themselves later embellished to present them as martyrs.
  6. The apostles as well as Jesus died for something else, perhaps they hoped they would help free Israel from the Romans.
  7. The apostles were never killed.
  8. The existence of the apostles was also an invention.
- Assuming the bible is true, Jesus didn't die, he was found alive some days after his crucifixion.\*
  - This is contrary to the account in the Bible.

According to the Bible Jesus did die and was resurrected, ergo creating a difference between resuscitation and resurrection. The gospels say that Jesus died on the cross as a result of crucifixion, if that doesn't prove his death, being in a sealed tomb for three days does. Furthermore, according to gospel accounts and other accounts, upon Jesus' resurrection it is said that he had wounds but wasn't in a state of looking ill (as would be the result of crucifixion and being in a tomb for three days). Thus Jesus had to die and resurrect, not just resuscitate.

Still the Gospels were all written at least a generation after the events stated there allegedly took place so we cannot be sure that the Gospel account is accurate.

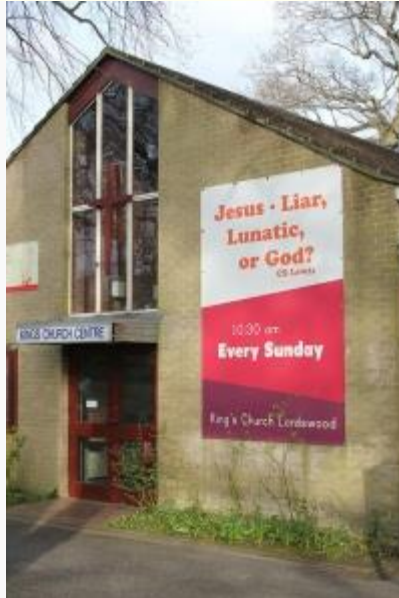
Achtemeier, Paul J. "Introducing the New Testament." Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2001.

## Liar, Lunatic or Lord



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Lewis's trilemma](#)



The argument on a banner outside a church.



There is little agreement as to what Jesus looked like.

The *liar, lunatic or lord* argument attempts to present a case through process of elimination of all other options, that Jesus Christ must have been god. It was proposed by [C.S. Lewis](#) and popularised in [Mere Christianity](#).

Even a number of theologians have pointed out that the *liar, lunatic or lord* argument is unsound. Apologists such as [William Lane Craig](#) cite this argument as a good example of a bad argument for Christianity. <sup>[1]</sup> This argument has also been referred to as the "trilemma" by [Josh McDowell](#). The

argument was originally used to show Jesus was not simply a wise moral teacher, rather than to demonstrate his godhood. However, C.S. Lewis goes on to use it as an argument for God. Despite this, the argument is widely used, and widely loved, by the more general Christian audience, as are many of Lewis' other equally flawed arguments such as the [argument from desire](#).

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## Argument

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### C.S. Lewis version

[C.S. Lewis](#) in [Mere Christianity](#) c.1952:

*"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not*

*come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."*

## Syllogism

- p1. Jesus made certain claims
- p2. These claims are of a nature that has certain implications about his character
  - a. Lunatic: Jesus was not God, but he mistakenly believed that he was
  - b. Liar: Jesus was not God, and he knew it, but he said so anyway
  - c. Lord: Jesus was telling the truth and is God
- p3. Through process of elimination we can exclude the possibilities of lunatic and liar
  - a. Existential evidence
  - b. Textual evidence
  - c. Historical evidence
- c1. Therefore Jesus was/is the the lord and God in human form.

## Counter arguments

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### False premise p1: Unfounded Assumptions

The first problem with the argument is that it assumes the efficacy of the bible. It assumes that the depiction of Jesus in the bible is historically accurate and an accurate depiction of his character, including (but not limited to) the words and claims attributed to him.

There is no first hand contemporary evidence that the words attributed to Jesus are his own as the earliest account was written after 60 AD. It can also be argued that due to the discrepancies between accounts no quote in the bible can be held as the true words of Jesus. However, the fact that a person called Jesus was crucified for blasphemy is regarded by some new testament scholars to be one of the most certain claims of ancient history (Bart Ehrman). As this is the biggest claim verifiable evidence can conclude, Occam's Razor states that it should be assumed that Jesus held no divine relationship or power unless additional evidence can be provided.

### False premise p2: False dilemma

Based on the shaky grounds of the first premise, the argument creates a [false dilemma](#) to suggest that Jesus as appearing in the gospels is either telling the truth or not. This of course neglects the obvious possibility that he is a legend, in which case his claims (or those claims attributed to him) are neither true or false, but partially or entirely fictional.

Nearly everything that is "known" about the life of Jesus, or his claims of godhood, come from the [Bible](#), which [Christians](#) regard as inerrant but [atheists](#) do not. Jesus may not have existed, or he may not have said all the things that were attributed to him, to the extent that his teachings were good he may have copied ideas from other people.



The premise also ignores hybrid possibilities. For instance, that Jesus may in fact have been a lunatic who said true things (much like an insane person who thinks he's Napoleon may still be able to tell you the correct day of the week or the prevailing weather conditions) or that he might have been the Lord *and* a liar (unlikely, but inconvenient for Lewis' intended point). At heart, the dilemma commits the [genetic fallacy](#), of assuming that an idea from a bad source is itself inevitably tainted.

Finally, the premise also ignores the very real possibility that Jesus existed and did say some of the things attributed to him, but may have been misinterpreted. Many believers will refer to themselves as "Children Of God" (or similar phrasings), but they presumably do not mean this literally. In a similar fashion, if Jesus did refer to himself as the "Son Of God," he may have intended it as a metaphor that was misunderstood by subsequent audiences. (In fact "Son of God" meant a righteous man, the Messiah or a prophet. Incidentally Christians sometimes describe themselves collectively as children of god while believing that they are ordinary human beings. This did not in any way mean the "physical" son of God, a very pagan belief that Jews considered very blasphemous.) Additionally, the term 'Lord' is a term of nobility and respect that has subsequently been confused to be synonymous with 'God'. When the disciples call Jesus 'Lord' they are not necessarily confirming a belief that he is God.

### **False premise p3: Unsupported evidence**

Even accepting the first two false premises, the so called evidence for the exclusion of lunatic and liar possibilities is questionable at best.

Many apologists, including some who are qualified psychologists, attempt to show that Jesus could not have been a lunatic. There are two major problems with this.

- First, is a complete lack of evidence. The idea of performing a real psychological diagnosis on someone that has been presumed dead for 2000 years, based solely on a few scarcely descriptive tales, from the very book that purports to reveal the truth of his divinity, is nothing short of laughable.
- Secondly, they make a case of special pleading. Despite the fact that Jesus isn't depicted as a rabid, uncontrollably raving maniac, doesn't mean he was necessarily sane. Any of the psychologists who attempt to claim Jesus was not insane would have no hang ups about committing a person today that made similar claims. Indeed if Jesus made his claims today, he would fit right in at the asylums full of other people that think they're God, Jesus, Napoleon etc.

Jesus could also have been a liar. Lewis disregards this because he claims Jesus was a *great human teacher*. However, much of Jesus' advice was [bad advice](#). And regardless of his lesson content, being a great teacher doesn't by fiat logically exclude the possibility

that he could lie. Jesus also had great motive to lie. Despite the trouble [Brian](#) found himself in, there are presumably a great many selfish benefits to being mistakenly considered a human deity.

Additionally, some forms of the *liar, lunatic or lord* argument further commit the fallacy of begging the question, by accepting the 'biblical miracles as evidence for the lord' option, which of course a priori assumes the conclusion of Jesus' divinity that the very argument attempts to prove.

## Other counter arguments

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- Lewis makes the [straw man](#) presumption that lunatics speak falsely, rave without moments of clarity, never say anything worth paying attention to, etc. In truth, one may suffer from a delusional belief or fixation and function adequately or even superlatively in society.

## Additional notes

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### Trilemma/Dilemma

The reason for the use of *dilemma* in False premise p2. rather than the titular *trilemma*, is due to the fact that despite there being three options, two of those have effectively the same outcome as far as the argument is concerned. The multiple options are really nothing more than a red herring, as the argument's outcome is that the claims of Jesus are either true or not true.

Additionally, formal logic deals exclusively with dichotomies, not trichotomies. The overall argument attempts to prove he is the lord. So to actually express all three options, logistically it would need to be presented as two separate, but hierarchical dichotomies.  
(lord:(liar:lunatic))

The main dichotomy: That he is either the lord or not-lord.

The sub dichotomy if he is not-lord: That he is either a liar or lunatic.

### Stature of Jesus

Jesus is perhaps the most famous, beloved and revered figure in the Western world today. In this context, any suggestion that he was even a little bit deluded, dishonest, or misrepresented seems like a much graver accusation than if made about one of the more obscure messiah-claimants living in ancient Rome. The trilemma is not a circular argument, but it occurs in a circular context; the argument's *emotional* weight is almost entirely due to the significant pre-existing influence of Christianity on culture, yet Christianity's validity is the very thing being argued for.

An example of this may be found in [this Tektonics](#) apologetic essay discussing the trilemma. The essay examines the counter-argument that people can falsely believe themselves to be God incarnate without being thoroughly "insane" in other areas. The author cites a case study of three patients with a messiah complex, and quotes them to demonstrate how overtly delusional they are. One of the patients, Clyde, says: *"Why, there's money coming from heaven and from the old country and from the sea of heaven. The carloads, trainloads, and boatloads... 7700 cars a mile and that runs from upper Stock Lake... God marked eight of our trails himself."* What in this quote suggests insanity? Well, there's a semi-incoherent mixture of the physical and transcendent (money coming from heaven, God personally marking some trails), and some detailed and high-hallucinogenic imagery.

But what about this quote from Jesus? *"The sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world -- the farthest ends of the earth and heaven."* Outside a Christian culture, this sounds like the elaborate fantasy of a schizophrenic, guilty not only of the same things as Clyde's quote, but some astronomical and geological errors as well. Inside a Christian culture, passages like that one are either [a valid reason](#) to prepare for the [End Times](#) they describe, or a very poetic [metaphor](#) — depending on the manner in which one wishes to present Jesus as a sane and respectable man.

## Occam's Razor

The "Lord" portion of the "Liar, Lunatic or Lord" argument is a condensed expression of a very extraordinary claim: that in Roman Palestine there was born a person literally identical to the omnipotent being who created the cosmos, and that this person demonstrated his unlimited superpowers through miracles such as raising the dead, walking on water, and so forth. Given the extremity of this claim, it seems odd to even *consider* questions about this person's mental state.

Suppose Alice tells Bob she can magically fly. Bob tells Claire about this, and adds that he's inclined to believe Alice. Claire is trying to determine whether or not Alice's claim is true. Should Claire's first question to Bob be "Well, has Alice ever lied or seemed crazy to you? Or do the things Alice says tend to be true?" That would be an absurd line of inquiry, almost irrelevant to the matter. Even if Bob and a thousand other witnesses attest to Alice never having been incorrect about anything

in the past, Claire does not have a decent reason to think that Alice can fly; what she needs is direct or indirect evidence of Alice actually flying.

Yet "Alice can fly" is a much smaller claim than "Jesus was and is God". It's one thing to trust the judgment of apparently trustworthy people, and it's another to grant their judgment with infinite evidential weight.

## Other religions

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Incidentally the leaders/founders of other religions can be postulated to be - whatever their religion claims-, liars or lunatics in a similar way and the different religions of the world cannot all be simultaneously true. This makes it a [broken compass argument](#).

*Basically, there are three scenarios possible:*

1. Muhammad (S) was telling the truth and spreading the message of God.
2. He was lying to gain power.
3. He was crazy and believed he in what he was doing. <sup>[2]</sup>

Furthermore, many religious claims are of an extraordinary nature if taken literally, but it does not follow from this that all believers are either liars or lunatics. Though some [faith healers](#) are secretly dishonest, many of them do think they have access to miraculous powers and are visited by thousands who believe themselves to be healed. For the most part, neither the "healers" nor the "healed" are clinically insane. Instead, they are guilty of [confirmation bias](#) and [compartmentalization](#), and the stories experience exaggeration in a similar manner as [urban legends](#). These are all possibilities regarding Jesus's own faith healing and other miracles; mystics and shamans from antiquity to today have used classic magician's techniques while still believing themselves to have supernatural abilities.

## Links

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### See also

- [Argument from desire](#)
- [Overview of early Christianity](#)
- [False dilemma](#)
- [Begging the question](#)

### External links

- [The Trilemma-- Lord, Liar Or Lunatic?](#) by Jim Perry at [infidels.org](#)
- [Liar, Loony, or Lord; Or, How Atheists Make C.S. Lewis Cry](#) by [Greta Christina](#)

### References

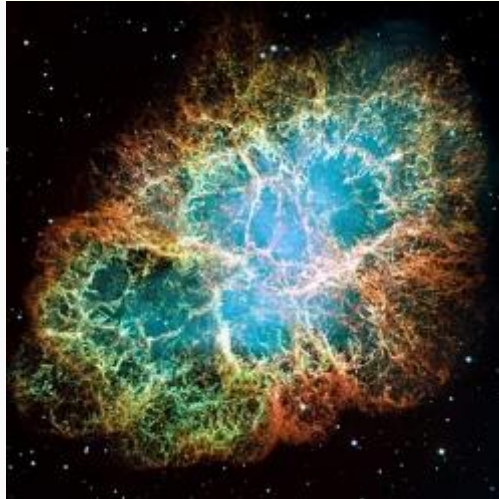
1. [↑](#) William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, Crossway Books (1994) pages 38–39.
2. [↑](#) [\[1\]](#)

# Argument from aesthetic experience



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*Argument from beauty\*](#)



Pretty nebula and stars



Van Gogh's Sunflowers (F.454)

Quoting the entire **argument from aesthetic experience**, also known as the **argument from sublimity**, verbatim: [\[1\]](#)

*There is the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.*

*Therefore there must be a God.*

*You either see this one or you don't.*

The argument can be varied with different works of art or natural wonders: "Look at the stars! therefore God."

*"I personally am convinced that there is another inspiration that convinces me there is a God; Art. Beautiful art. <sup>[2]</sup>"*

Apologists argue that the [Qur'an](#) is the most eloquent book ever written, which is itself a [miracle](#).

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## Counter arguments

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This is a [non sequitur](#), i.e., the conclusion does not follow from the premise. Aesthetic experiences do not automatically imply the existence of other entities such as God.

Aesthetic experiences are mental phenomena and do not require divine intervention to occur. There are many ways of achieving profound spiritual experiences, even though these experiences are relatively rare. They occur in many different religions, so the argument [does not support any particular god](#).

*"aesthetic experiences are still, more than likely, internal excitations of the brain, as we see from the fact that ingesting recreational drugs can bring on even more intense experiences of transcendence. And the particular triggers for natural aesthetic experiences are readily explicable from the evolutionary pressures that have shaped the perceptual systems of human beings. <sup>[3]</sup>"*

Believing the world actually contains beauty existing separately from the perspective of an observer commits the [projection fallacy](#). <sup>[3]</sup>

The most logically valid interpretation of the argument might be that Bach *is* God.

Exactly the same argument can be used to argue against the existence of God and aesthetic experience:

*"[God] was counter to the taste of mine ears and eyes; worse than that I should not like to say against him."*

— [Friedrich Nietzsche](#)

## References

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1. [↑](#) [\[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) [\[2\]](#)
3. [↑](#) [3.0](#) [3.1](#) Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, [36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction](#), 2011

## See also

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- [Argument from divine sense](#)
- [Argument from design](#)

## External links

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- [Open Goldberg Variations](#) (free music download) composed by Bach and alleged proof of God.
- [Argument from The Sublime](#), on doxa.ws

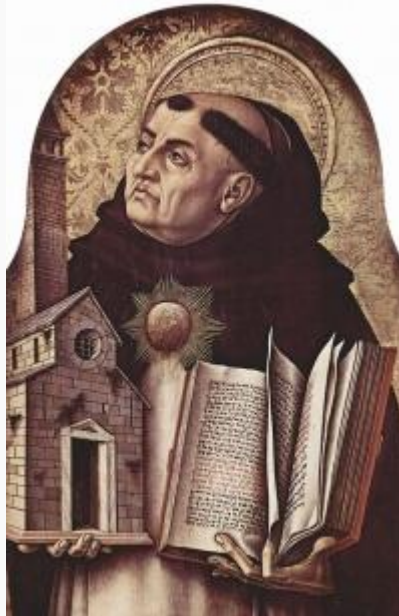


# Argument from contingency



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Argument from contingency](#)



Thomas Aquinas proposed this argument in his *Summa Theologica*

The **argument from contingency** is a [cosmological argument](#) proposed by [Thomas Aquinas](#) in his book [Summa Theologica](#). Because it is his third argument, it is also known as **Aquinas's third way**.

It argues that some objects have the property that they must exist, because if everything is contingent (it might exist or it might not) and transient, there would have been a state in which nothing existed at all, which is supposedly absurd.

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## Formal argument

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1. Natural objects tend to have been generated and have a tendency/possibility to be corrupted. <sup>[1]</sup>
2. From (1) These objects may exist or may not exist i.e. they are contingent.
3. If an object can be non-existent and tends to be corrupted, each object sometimes does not exist.
4. From (3), contingent objects cannot always exist i.e. they are transient.
5. If everything is contingent and tends to be corrupted or have been generated, then at some point nothing existed at all.
6. Contingent objects require something that exists to bring it into existence.
7. If nothing existed in the past, nothing contingent would exist now.
8. Contingent things exist.
9. Therefore not everything is contingent.
10. Some objects are not contingent. These are necessary objects.

Having established that there must be necessary objects, the argument moves to consider causes of necessary objects.

1. Necessary objects are caused by another necessary object, or not.
2. There is no infinite regress of necessary objects causing other necessary objects.
3. Therefore the chain of causes terminates in a necessary object that itself is its own necessity, i.e. God.

This argument is phrased in an attempt to express [Aquinas](#)'s point, originally written in Latin, in modern language. He uses "possibility" in an archaic sense: <sup>[1]</sup>

*"The 'possibility' in question is not some abstract logical possibility but rather something 'inherent,' a tendency 'to be corrupted' rooted 'in the nature of those things... whose matter is subject to contrariety of forms' (QDP 5.3). In other words, given that the matter out of which the things of our experience is composed is always inherently capable of taking on forms different from the ones it happens currently to instantiate, these things have a kind of inherent metaphysical instability that guarantees that they will at some point fail to exist."*

In a sense, the argument is based on the tendency of objects not to exist.

## Counter arguments

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### Contingency and transiency does not imply the past non-existence of everything

[Aquinas](#) points out that individual objects come into existence and decay out of existence, implicitly saying they tend to not remain in existence. In other words, a individual objects "tend not to exist". However, the tendency of objects to non-existence does not generalise to all objects tending to non-exist *at the same time*. His point would be valid if existence and non-existence of objects was random and the universe had finite material. Looking far back in time, everything would non-existent by chance and that "everything non-existent" state could not kick start history. But this is not true in general because existence and non-existence is not random.

Objects are mental constructs, the material of an object is more fundamental. While a house may have been created, it was built out of pre-existing trees. If the house burns down, it is destroyed but it creates ash. In each case the materials, or to be specific, the atoms and energy that constituted each object continues exist in another form. Objects are better understood to be in flux or transition to other objects. [Aquinas](#) argues that objects are "destroyed" but this is hardly relevant when the materials persist. The universe tends to have conservation laws, such as the conservation of mass and of energy. This seems a much more universal principle than [Aquinas's](#) claim of contingency and transience.

Based on our experience, the materials in the universe continued to exist, in various forms. We can therefore suppose the materials have always existed, perhaps in different forms or in unknown forms.

## **Assumption that an infinite regress cannot happen**

*Main Article: [Infinite regress does not occur](#)*

The argument assumes [infinite regress](#) cannot occur but this is difficult to establish if it is true.

### **Natural processes are not ruled out**

Natural processes are not ruled out. The universe or some physical process might have the property of necessarily existing.

### **No specific God is supported by the argument**

*Main Article: [The first cause implies God exists](#)*

[No specific God](#) is supported by the argument and the attributes of God cannot be inferred. The conclusion is hardly relevant to religion. The argument does not rule out polytheism or pantheism.

### **Proof by logic**

*Main Article: [Proof by logic](#)*

Pure logic proofs cannot say anything about matters of fact.

### **Objects may spontaneously come into existence**

*Main Article: [Not all events necessarily have causes](#)*

The argument asserts that "contingent objects require something that exists to bring it into existence." However, this is arguably a false statement and a [hasty generalization](#). It is possible that some events, particular on the quantum scale, do not have causes (or at least we do not fully understand the cause at this time). This is also known as the [Glendower problem](#).

## References

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1. <sup>[↑](#)</sup> <sup>[1.0](#)</sup> <sup>[1.1](#)</sup> Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*, Oneworld Publications 2009 <sup>[\[1\]](#)</sup>

## See also

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- [Why is there something rather than nothing?](#)

# Cosmological argument



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*\*Cosmological argument\*\*\*](#)

The **cosmological argument** is an argument for God based on the principle that everything has a cause. The argument is also known as the **first cause argument**, **uncaused cause argument**, **argument from existence** and the **causal argument**. One of the most influential statements of the argument was by [Thomas Aquinas](#):

*"Nothing is caused by itself. Every effect has a prior cause. This leads to a [regress](#). This has to be terminated by a first cause, which we call [God](#)."*

There are some popular variants of the cosmological argument, including:

- [Kalam](#), which argues that things that do not come into existence do not require a cause, and
- [Why is there something rather than nothing?](#), which argues the chain of events or state of the universe requires an extra explanation.
- [Leibniz cosmological argument](#), uses a chain of explanations rather than a chain of causes. It depends on the premise that "everything that exists requires an explanation"; this concept is known as the [principle of sufficient reason](#).

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## Formal Argument

The argument runs like this:

1. Everything that exists must have a cause.
2. If you follow the chain of events backwards through time, [it cannot go back infinitely](#), so eventually you arrive at the first cause.

3. This cause must, itself, be uncaused.
4. But nothing can exist without a cause, except for God.
5. Therefore, God exists.

## Counter-arguments

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Many of the criticisms of the [Unmoved mover](#) argument apply here.

### Infinite regress

Main Article: [Infinite regress does not occur](#)

The most concise answer to this argument is: "[Who created God?](#)", which in turn raises the question "Who created God's creator?", and so on ad infinitum. This known as an infinite regress or "[It's turtles all the way down](#)".

It is not necessarily impossible for there to be an infinite chain of causes and effects. Among scientists, it is widely agreed that our universe began with the Big Bang. but we don't know what occurred in the first split second after the Big Bang, nor can we comment on anything that came before it, as no experiments have yet been devised that could test any hypotheses about these early moments. (For further discussion on this topic, see the [Big Bang](#) article.)

Some have claimed that with an infinite past, we could never get to now. Flip the infinity: does an infinity of seconds not stretch forward into the future, eternally? Starting from an infinite future, can you go a second before that, and a second before that, ad infinitum, and get to now?

Possible response: [Second law of thermodynamics implies the universe is of finite age](#)

### Why assume the first cause is god-like?

Main Article: [Which god?](#)

Natural processes and multiple creators are not ruled out.

Even if we grant that a first cause exists, it makes no sense to assume that it is any kind of god, let alone [Yahweh](#). The idea of an intelligent, universe-creating god "just existing" is **far** more difficult to explain than the universe itself "just existing". [Intelligence](#) is one of the most complex things we are aware of in the universe. To assume the existence of a being who is so intelligent that it can design an entire universe, as well as micromanage the personal lives of billions of people on earth through prayer, would require an enormous amount of explanation.

### Special pleading regarding God existing outside of time

There is a contradiction between the first statement and the second statement. If "everything that exists has a cause" then there cannot exist anything that does not

have a cause, which means that there is no first cause. Either some things can exist without causes, or nothing can. It can't be both ways. God is considered to be exempt from infinite regress by [special pleading](#).

Changing "Everything that exists has a cause" to "Everything that *begins* to exist has a cause" produces a variant known as the [Kalam](#) cosmological argument.

Christians try to avoid [regress](#) of God by saying "God does not need a cause because He is outside of time." This is a glib non-answer. If all that is required to get around the first cause argument is an entity that exists outside of time, then all we need to do is postulate a single particle that exists outside of time and triggered the Big Bang. It need not have any additional powers. Besides, this particle might even exist, depending on how you define "outside of time." Photons (light particles) do not experience time, since they move at the speed of light. Therefore, according to this argument, light can pop into existence without cause.

Theists will object that this particle should have a cause. But they have already refuted this argument by granting that there exists an uncaused cause in the first place. If God can exist without a cause, why not a particle? Why not the universe? It may be the universe is the necessarily existent being and it is impossible for it to be in any other state.

## **Not all events necessarily have causes**

*Main Article:* [Not all events necessarily have causes](#)

The argument asserts that "everything that exists has a cause". However, this is arguably a false statement and a [hasty generalization](#). It is possible that some events, particular on the quantum scale, do not have causes (or at least we do not fully understand the cause at this time).

Some versions of the cosmological argument rely on chains of explanations starting from observed phenomena. However, no such explanation may exist and the phenomena might be a "brute fact". This is known as the [Glendower problem](#).

## **Unparsimonious explanation**

*Main Article:* [Ultimate 747 gambit](#)

The God hypothesis is not only unnecessary, it is not [parsimonious](#). In order to explain something apparently designed and which cannot create itself, a being is conjured into existence which would require even more unlikely explanation.

## **A-priori arguments cannot establish matters of fact**

*Main Article:* [Proof by logic](#)

Overall, this argument is an example of a [proof by logic](#), where philosophers attempt to "demonstrate" god with a logical syllogism alone, devoid of any confirming evidence. This is arguably inappropriate for establishing matters of fact.

## See also

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- [Unmoved mover](#)
- [Argument from contingency](#)



# Fine-tuning argument



For more information, see the [TalkOrigins Archive](#) article:

[\*\*The Anthropic Principle\*\*](#)



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*Fine-tuned Universe\*\*](#)



With different physical constants, the universe would look quite different.

In [cosmology](#), **fine tuning** refers to the precise balance of [cosmological constants](#) that allow the [observable universe](#) to exist as it does. If the constants were slightly different, the universe would be significantly different. There are many such physical constants including: the speed of light, the rate of expansion of the universe, the force of gravity, the nuclear strong force and the electromagnetic force. The **fine tuning argument** states that these values occurring in such a precise state by mere chance is highly improbable, and that there must have been a creator to fine tune these values in order for our universe to exist as it does and for life to exist on Earth.

The argument of fine tuning is a rather new one. It has only become popular since the mid-1990s with recent observations about the observable universe and cosmological constants. Cosmologists have theorized that even minute variations in the values of these constants would have resulted in a radically different universe or one altogether unsuitable for supporting life as we know it.

*"The cosmos is fine-tuned to permit human life. If any of several fundamental constants were only slightly different, life would be impossible. (This claim is also known as the weak anthropic principle.)<sup>[1]</sup>"*

*"To believe that the facts and figures here detailed amount to no more than happy coincidence, without doubt constitutes a greater exercise of faith than that of the Christian who affirms the theistic design of the universe. <sup>[2]</sup>"*

*"In fact, the universe is specifically tweaked to enable life on earth-a planet with scores of improbable and interdependent life-supporting conditions that make it a tiny oasis in a vast and hostile universe. <sup>[3]</sup>"*

Essentially this argument is just a variation on the [argument from design](#) but uses cosmology rather than biological problems. Just as biological mysteries were solved by scientists, so too might the mysteries in cosmology. Fine tuning heavily depends on the [argument from ignorance](#) fallacy, [god of the gaps](#) and [shifting the burden of proof](#). Also, this argument is essentially the same as the [anthropic theistic principle](#).

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## Specific fine tuned parameters

There are many physical constants which, if varied, would result in a very different universe. These include:

- Strengths of the fundamental forces.
  - "Another finely tuned value is the strong nuclear force that holds atoms — and therefore matter — together." <sup>[2]</sup> The strong nuclear force is the force which binds protons and neutrons together in the nucleus of an atom. Scientists have calculated that variations in the strong force of as little as  $\pm 1\%$  would have drastically affected the breakdown of naturally occurring elements in the universe, prohibiting the formation of stars, black holes, and other natural occurring phenomena.
  - Gravity <sup>[3]</sup>
- "The rate at which the universe expands must be finely tuned to one part in  $10^{55}$ ." <sup>[2]</sup> The rate of expansion of matter after the [Big Bang](#) had to occur at precisely the right rate to allow our universe to form as it has. If it had expanded

any faster, matter would have dissipated too quickly for stars and solar systems to form. If it had occurred any slower, the universe would have collapsed upon itself shortly after the Big Bang, resulting in what is known as a [Big Crunch](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

- Lumpiness of the density of the universe, as seen in cosmic background radiation.<sup>[2]</sup>
- Ratio of protons and electrons. <sup>[2]</sup>
- The Earth-Sun distance. <sup>[4]</sup>
- The tilt of the Earth's axis (life could probably survive with less tilt) <sup>[4][3]</sup>
- The composition of the Earth's atmosphere. <sup>[4][3]</sup>
- Atmospheric transparency (which is not even a real constraint to life) <sup>[3]</sup>
- The Moon stabilizing the Earth's rotation. <sup>[3]</sup>
- Speed of light <sup>[3]</sup>
- Jupiter protecting the Earth from many asteroid collisions <sup>[3]</sup>
- Thickness of the Earth's crust <sup>[3]</sup>
- Length of the Earth day (which is not even a real constraint to life) <sup>[3]</sup>
- Lightning (which is not even a real constraint to life) <sup>[3]</sup>
- Earthquakes (which is not even a real constraint to life) <sup>[3]</sup>

## The argument

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Here is [Drange](#)'s formulation: <sup>[5]</sup>

1. The combination of physical constants that we observe in our universe is the only one capable of the "origin, development, and continuation of life as we know it".
2. Other combinations of physical constants are conceivable and are just as probable.
3. Therefore, some explanation is needed why our actual combination of physical constants exists rather than a different one.
4. The occurrence of life is "a very special feature" of our universe. This requires explanation.
5. The very best explanation of life in our universe is that it is "a product of [intelligent design](#)".
6. Therefore, there is very good evidence an intelligent designer exists.

Theists cite this remarkable balance of cosmological constants as evidence of a creator, being a far too unlikely set of circumstances to have occurred naturally. Some apologists set up a choice between types of explanations or causes and then rule out the alternatives to find the actual one.

*"What is the best explanation for this astounding phenomenon? There are three live options. The fine-tuning of the universe is due to either physical necessity, chance, or design. Which of these options is the most plausible?"*

— [William Lane Craig](#)<sup>[6]</sup>

Fine tuning is quickly becoming the argument of choice of [creationism](#) proponents like [Lee Strobel](#). Strobel presents this concept as incontrovertible empirical evidence of God in his book [The Case for a Creator](#).

## **The theistic hypothesis is more probable**

A version of the fine tuning argument is based on probabilities:

*"our existence as embodied, intelligent beings is extremely unlikely under the atheistic single-universe hypothesis (since our existence requires fine-tuning), but not improbable under theism. [\[7\]](#)"*

This argument fails because it pretends it can evaluate the probability of our universe having the properties it does by natural processes or chance. This information is currently unknown to humans.

## **Argument from cosmic coincidences**

A variant of the argument asks why various astronomical facts seem to be tailored to improve our appreciation of the universe, such as the apparent size of the moon making total eclipses possible. Along with the usual flaws in the argument, it also suffers from the [projection fallacy](#). [\[8\]](#)

*"Today's eclipse provides another example of this so called "fine-tuning". [\[9\]](#)"*

*"Why subscribe to the incredible odds that the tilt and position of our planet relative to the sun are merely coincidental?" [\[10\]](#)"*

Arguably, this is more closely related to the [argument from design](#) than fine tuning of physical constants. Some examples also draw on the [argument from aesthetic experience](#).

## **Fine tuned for discovery**



For more information, see the [TalkOrigins Archive](#) article:

### **[Fine-tuned for discovery](#)**

*"the conditions most suited for life also provided the best overall setting for making scientific discoveries. [\[2\]](#)"*

This is a fairly absurd statement, particularly to professional scientists. The universe is hard to explore and investigate. Many phenomena are far away, tiny, occurs over long time scales, only evident in rare circumstances, invisible or hard to detect. In any case, why would God want us to discover it when he could just tell us directly?

## **Counter-apologetics**

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Most or all counter-arguments for [argument from design](#), the [natural law argument](#), and the [anthropic principle](#) are also counter-arguments to fine-tuning.

## False dichotomy, argument from ignorance

The fine tuning argument is based on the dichotomy of:

- The parameters of the universe are a "happy coincidence"
- or God selected the parameters to fulfil some purpose.

This is a [false dichotomy](#). A better fork would be:

- The parameters of the universe are a "happy coincidence",
- or God selected the parameters to fulfil some purpose,
- or the universe could not be other than it is,
- or some unknown natural process caused the universe to be as it is.

The problem is it is almost impossible to rule out the last two options, making the argument an [argument from ignorance](#) and [god of the gaps](#). Apologists often confuse natural processes with random processes, which leads them to equate them. The argument is essentially the same as saying "lighting occurs and **Thor** is the best explanation" at a time before the understanding of electricity.

*"There will never be an Isaac Newton for a blade of grass."*

— [Immanuel Kant](#)

[Sean Carroll](#) pointed out there was a genius that did the same for grass, and biology generally: [Charles Darwin](#). <sup>[11]</sup> It is not unreasonable to expect there would be a similar genius that might one day solve the cosmological mystery.

## Not evidence for God

Largely the argument itself hinges on the narrow range of properties for the universe to develop to allow for life. But, this narrow range is precisely the required range needed for life in this universe to occur naturally if there were no God.

*"The intelligent beings in these regions should therefore not be surprised if they observe that their locality in the universe satisfies the conditions that are necessary for their existence. It is a bit like a rich person living in a wealthy neighborhood not seeing any poverty."*

— [Stephen Hawking](#)

*"Similarly the "fine tuning" of the universe's physical constants: that would be a great proof—if it wasn't exactly the same thing we'd see if a god didn't exist."*

— [Richard Carrier](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

*"Imagine a puddle waking up one morning and thinking, 'This is an interesting world I find myself in, an interesting hole I find myself in, fits me rather neatly, doesn't it? In fact it fits me staggeringly well, must have been made to have me in it!' This is such a powerful idea that as the sun rises in the sky and the air heats up and as, gradually, the puddle gets smaller and smaller, it's still frantically hanging on to the notion that everything's going to be alright, because this world was meant to have him in it, was built to have him in it; so the moment he disappears catches him rather by surprise. I think this may be something we need to be on the watch out for."*

— [Douglas Adams](#)

### **Firing squad counter argument**

Apologists liken this response to surviving a firing squad execution because all the shooters "missed". They point out that it is more likely they never intended to kill rather than they all had poor aim. Similarly, we might ask what is the likeliest explanation for the universe.

*"Of course all of the shots missed, otherwise I wouldn't be here to notice that I'm still alive!"<sup>[13]</sup>*

This goes back to making probability claims about the universe, which the apologist has not yet established reliably (since it is currently beyond human knowledge). Another problem is that the explanation that the shooters missed on purpose is a testable explanation, while the explanation of "God did it" is not. This applies to both God saving you from a firing squad or selecting the properties of the universe. <sup>[14]</sup>

### **Invalid use of probability**

*"Premise 2. The existence of the fine-tuning is very improbable under the atheistic single-universe hypothesis. <sup>[7]</sup>"*

*"Astrophysicist [and creationism apologist] Hugh Ross has calculated the probability that these and other constants-122 in all-would exist today for any planet in the universe by chance (i.e., without divine design). Assuming there are  $10^{22}$  planets in the universe (a very large number: 1 with 22 zeros following it), his answer is shocking: one chance in  $10^{138}$ -that's one chance in one with 138 zeros after it!"<sup>[3]</sup>*

The argument assumes that there is a certain range of values that each physical constant could assume. The greater these ranges, the more unlikely that a given set of constants would have assumed the values we observe. However, to simply imagine a certain range of possible numerical values that each constant could assume and calculating the probability that this value would be arrived at by mere chance is fallacious for two reasons. Currently, we have no access to data that would tell us a) what range the constants could possibly assume in reality

and b) how many trials there were in which the constants assumed certain values ([Texas sharpshooter fallacy](#)). If in a lottery one number were drawn from a pot of five numbers, then winning the lottery would become comparatively likely. Likewise, even if a trial with an extremely unlikely outcome - say winning an actual national lottery - were repeated a sufficient number of times, the outcome would become likely to occur overall.

To avoid an [argument from ignorance](#), an apologist must rule out *all* other hypotheses, including as yet unknown hypotheses, to make an argument by elimination. It is almost impossible to rule out all undiscovered hypothesis in a field so far removed from human experience. However, without doing this, the apologist inevitably makes an [argument from ignorance](#) and commits [god of the gaps](#).

### **Assuming parameters are contingent**

*"The particular group of values that exists for the fundamental physical constants of our universe (call it "GPC") is just one of a huge number of different groups of values, all of which are physically possible (i.e., not ruled out by more basic laws).<sup>[5]</sup>"*

The argument presupposes that there is a certain range of possible values the constants can take. We don't know whether this is true, we have no idea what values the constants can take or if they can take other values at all.

*"There's no reason or evidence to suggest that fine-tuning is necessary."*

— [William Lane Craig<sup>\[6\]</sup>](#)

The apologist is again [shifting the burden of proof](#). They are the ones that need to demonstrate that "the properties of the universe are contingent, not necessary" for their argument to work. Saying "we have no evidence to the contrary" is an [argument from ignorance](#).

*"According to the atheistic single-universe hypothesis, there is only one universe, and it is ultimately an inexplicable, "brute" fact that the universe exists and is fine-tuned.<sup>[7]</sup>"*

That is not the case and is a [straw man](#) argument. Skeptics say that the properties of the universe *may* be [brute facts](#) or possibly explainable some time in the future, but the [burden of proof](#) is on the apologist to show that this is not the case. They have so far only offered various [arguments from ignorance](#).



### ***Parameters are not necessarily independent***

In order for the probability argument to be valid, the fundamental constants under consideration have to be independent. That is, one cannot claim that the gravitational constant and the speed of expansion of the universe were individually tuned, since they are clearly related. The electromagnetic force is mediated by massless photons which travel at the speed of light, so therefore the strength of this force is likely related to the speed of light. Similar relationships may yet emerge between other constants. Ignoring that results in a [god of the gaps](#).

### ***Majority argument or analogy***

*"Upon looking at the data, many people find it very obvious that the fine-tuning is highly improbable under the atheistic single-universe hypothesis. <sup>[7]</sup>"*

It is unwise to use a [appeal to majority](#) when discussing a subject that is very far removed from peoples' experience. Human intuition may be quite misleading in this case.

*"Accordingly, from this analogy it seems obvious that it would be highly improbable for the fine-tuning to occur under the atheistic single-universe hypothesis--that is, for the dart to hit the board by chance. <sup>[7]</sup>"*

An [analogy](#) can be either valid or invalid. We can only know its validity with some other data or experience. For this reason, analogies are not appropriate when they can be independently verified. This is not the case here.

### ***Natural processes are not random***

Apologists often confuse natural processes with random processes, which leads them to equate them. Natural processes proceed by *necessity*. If the properties of the universe were determined by natural processes, it is inappropriate to apply probability because chance does not enter into it.

### ***Apologists would not be satisfied by a scientific explanation***

Apologists object saying that any law that explains the parameters or the relationship between them would also require an explanation, leading to [infinite regress](#).

*"the problem with postulating such a law is that it simply moves the improbability of the fine-tuning up one level, to that of the postulated physical law itself<sup>[7]</sup>"*

*"this essentially results in a fine-tuning problem even for Theories of Everything.<sup>[15]</sup>"*

If the fine tuning argument is resolved by scientific discoveries, apologists would *still* not be satisfied. They [move the goalposts](#) to the [natural law argument](#). This is not a reasonable way of arguing and the fine tuning argument probably should be abandoned for the natural law argument since apologists are not going to be satisfied with a scientific explanation anyway. If the natural laws were

somehow explained, apologists probably would switch to asking [why is there something rather than nothing?](#) This again illustrates that the fine tuning argument is irrelevant.

## The multiverse?

Some scientists theorize that given the infinite nature of time and space, an infinite number of other unobservable universes could exist parallel to our own, each with infinite variations of constants. This is known as the [multiverse theory](#). Given infinite possibilities, the formation of a universe such as our own is not so inconceivable. There is no evidence of the multiverse so far but scientists are looking to see if there is any interaction between our universe and other universes; this might happen on the cosmic scale. It is important to remember that the existence of the multiverse does not have to be proved to undermine the fine tuning argument, but only that it is a *possibility*.

*"Note that the multiverse does not need to be proven to exist to invalidate the fine-tuning argument for a creator. It just needs to be a possible alternative.*

*Nevertheless, theologians have vehemently objected to the multiverse. [\[16\]](#)"*

One way of looking at the multiverse is to imagine somebody claiming to be psychic and they win the lottery three times in a row. That seems to be good evidence. However, if they bought every possible combination of numbers for each of those lotteries, that feat requires no psychic abilities at all.

### **Arguments against the Multiverse**

The idea of the multiverse is speculative:

*"First, and most significantly, there's no evidence for it![\[3\]](#)"*

An argument by [analogy](#) is that humans once believed that the Earth was the only planet, then they believed this solar system was the only one, then they believed this galaxy was the only one. Each time they have been wrong. Along similar lines, it is quite conceivable that many universes exist. However, the [burden of proof](#) is on the apologist since they claim that "this is the only universe", which is an implicit premise of their argument.

Apologists such as [William Lane Craig](#) argue that for the multiverse to work as an explanation, more needs to be known.

*"If MWH [many world hypothesis] is to commend itself as a plausible hypothesis, then some plausible mechanism for generating the many worlds needs to be explained. [\[17\]](#)"*

This is not the case. Of course, he is correct in that MWH is very speculative but it is plausible without a full understanding of its details. It

may be we can one day travel to other universes but still have no understanding of their origin. It also is [shifting the burden of proof](#) because it is on the apologist to prove that this universe is the only one, which is required for their argument to work.

Apologists are generally critical of multiverse theories but their criticism misses the point: they also have to rule out *all* other plausible explanations, including ones that have not been yet considered by scientists. Since the origin of the universe is beyond our everyday experience, almost any scenario is plausible. Ruling them out is not yet practically possible but until it is done, fine-tuning is an [argument from ignorance](#).

### ***The Multiverse must have had a beginning***

Apologists point out that the multiverse must have had a universe. This actually moves from being a fine-tuning argument to being a [cosmological argument](#), which is a case of [moving the goalposts](#).

*"Borde-Guth-Vilenkin theorem requires that the multiverse itself cannot be extended into the infinite past <sup>[17]</sup>"*

This assumes the multiverse experiences time in the normal way, and that it is "expanding". Neither assumption has been demonstrated for the multiverse, which is not surprising because it has never been directly observed. Apologists pretend that the theory of "eternal inflation" is the only theory of the multiverse, and pose a [false dichotomy](#) between eternal inflation and God. Far too little is known about the multiverse to rule it out as a possibility, but it *remains* a possibility.

### ***Infinite regress***

Apologists argue that the multiverse, as an explanation, suffers from [infinite regress](#).

*"And the universe generator, itself, would require an enormous amount of fine-tuning!"*

— [William Lane Craig<sup>\[6\]</sup>](#)

*"even if other universes could exist, they would need fine-tuning to get started just as our universe did (recall the extreme precision of the Big Bang we described in the last chapter). So positing multiple universes doesn't eliminate the need for a Designer—it multiplies the need for a Designer!<sup>[3]</sup>"*

It is possible that the universe generator is defined by natural laws and has no "free parameters", so no tuning is

required (and the apologist might switch to the [natural law argument](#)). Also, this objection is plausible but the same criticism can be levelled at the "God" explanation.

Steve Shives makes an [analogy](#) with snowflakes. If a person claims that a particular snowflake had a designer, we can point out that particular snowflake is not special because many just-as-special snowflakes exist. The person cannot reasonably argue that all the other snowflakes require a designer because the property that indicated design has already been explained. <sup>[18]</sup>

If it exists, the universe generator cannot be said to be fine tuned because it churns out an excessive number of universes apparently without reason. A God might be expected to be more parsimonious and directed in his actions. Such a situation would lend itself to an [argument from poor design](#).

### ***There can't be an actual infinite number of universes***

*"[...]as we discussed in the last chapter, an infinite number of finite things—whether we're talking about days, books, bangs, or universes—is an actual impossibility.*

*There can't be an unlimited number of limited universes.* <sup>[3]</sup>"

Firstly, how can they know this? This is just an unsupported assertion.

Secondly, the authors are applying their principle based on evidence *within* universe to a situation *outside* our universe. This is far from reliable. <sup>[18]</sup>

Also, there can be a finite but unlimited number of other universes (i.e. a potentially [infinite](#) number), which would side step this objection. <sup>[18]</sup>

### ***Anything can be explained by the multiverse***

*"the Multiple Universe Theory is so broad that any event can be explained away by it. For example, if we ask, "Why did the planes hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon?" we need not blame Muslim terrorists: the theory lets us say that we just happen to be in the universe where those planes—though they appeared to be flown deliberately into the buildings—actually hit the buildings by accident* <sup>[3]</sup>"

This is a false [analogy](#) because the causes of our universe and the causes of everyday occurrences have different amounts of available evidence. The "cause" of the universe is highly speculative since there is scant evidence and we may therefore entertain the multiverse hypothesis. Everyday occurrences are repeatable and we require more predictive and falsifiable [explanations](#).

This argument can also be applied to the "god did it" explanation: there is literally nothing that it can't explain!<sup>[18]</sup>

## **Fine tuned for life or something else?**

Another flaw with this argument is that it assumes our universe is finely tuned for the sole purpose of supporting life. This is not necessarily the case at all. Given the laws of our universe, scientists theorize that our universe is composed of less than 2% baryonic matter, that is matter consisting of protons, neutrons or other particles equal or greater than that of a proton. Dark matter is by far the most common form of matter in our universe. Our universe, if anything, is far more suited for the creation of black holes than it is for supporting life. <sup>[19]</sup> Life on our planet constitutes only an insignificant portion of our universe. Some apologists argue that the universe must be fine tuned for life *on Earth*, which is basically [begging the question](#) in that it assumes that the Earth is the only possible scenario for life to exist:

*"Even a slight variation in the speed of light would alter the other constants and preclude the possibility of life on earth."<sup>[3]</sup>*

Life is just one of the possible things that may arise in the universe, and by itself is no more or less important than any of those other things. It's just that, as living beings ourselves, we tend to place a higher value on life than other aspects of the universe. This is another instance of humans' bias towards [anthropocentrism](#) and the [confirmation bias](#). Humans have evolved to suit their environment, rather than our environment being tailored to suit us - a flag points north because the wind blows north; the wind doesn't blow north to *allow* the flag to point north.

In a hypothetical universe with different physical constants, there may be an emergent natural phenomenon that is vastly more complex than the emergence of life, the evolution of life, and the ecology of life. This phenomenon, we will label "phenomenon x", would be impossible in our universe because our physical constants may not permit phenomenon x to occur. There is no objective reason why the possibility of life demands a fine tuner more than phenomenon x. There is also no objective reason why any natural phenomenon, no matter the complexity, should demand a fine tuner any more than another. Hypothetically, if it were shown that life of some kind is possible in most possible universes, but the phenomenon of lightning is only possible in this one, then an apologist might assert that because we occupy the only possible universe with lightning, this universe must have been finely tuned.

### **Illustrative example**

A [reductio ad absurdum](#) can be constructed to demonstrate the weakness of the argument. If life is improbable then the existence of spaghetti is even more improbable.

1. The combination of physical constants that we observe in our universe is the only one capable of sustaining spaghetti as we know it.
2. Other combinations of physical constants are conceivable.
3. Therefore, some explanation is needed why our actual combination of physical constants exists rather than a different one.
4. The very best explanation of the given fact is that our universe, with the particular combination of physical constants that it has, was created out of nothing by a single being who is omnipotent, omniscient, and interested in spaghetti, and that he "fine-tuned" those constants in a way which would lead to the evolution of such foods.
5. But such a being as described in (4) is what is meant by the "[Flying Spaghetti Monster](#)".
6. Hence [from (4) & (5)], there is good evidence that the "Flying Spaghetti Monster" exists.

### **Assumes life "as we know it" is the only type of life**

*"[our universe has] the only group of values for the fundamental physical constants of a world (or region of spacetime) that would permit the origin, development, and continuation of life as we know it within that world. <sup>[5]</sup>"*

*"It is certainly true that if you change the parameters of nature, the local conditions around us would change by alot. I grant that quickly. I do not grant that therefore life could not exist. I will start granting that once someone tells me the conditions under which life can exist. What is the definition of life, for example? If it is just information processing, thinking or something like that, there is a huge panoply of possibilities."*

— [Sean Carroll](#)<sup>[11]</sup>

The fine tuning argument assumes that life as we know it is the only possible form. If the constants of the universe were different, that does not rule out the possibility that intelligent life could nonetheless still arise, albeit in a form currently unimaginable to us. Asking how a particular outcome could have happened when other outcomes would have been just as significant commits the [Texas sharpshooter fallacy](#). The apologist needs to show that no other forms of life are possible, which is not practical to do.

The premise "our universe contains the only possible life" is compatible with the conclusion "humans exist". However, attempting to use the conclusion to support the premise is [affirming the consequent](#) fallacy.

## **No evidence of other types of life**

*"This assumes that different types of life exist, something for which there is absolutely no evidence. [\[20\]](#)"*

This tries to [shift the burden of proof](#) without a valid justification. The burden of proof that "this is the only possible form of life" is on the apologist.

### **No atoms would exist**

*"If [the strong nuclear force] were slightly larger or smaller, no atoms could exist other than hydrogen. [\[7\]](#)"*

How does the apologist know that life requires atoms?

Again, [argument from ignorance](#). There may be a much more straightforward way for life to emerge in very different physics and it is our universe's life that is an exception. Apologists should be careful not to claim life in our universe is typical of life in general, or they commit the [spotlight fallacy](#).

## **Infinite regress**

If there were a creator who "fine tuned" the universe for our existence, who "fine tuned" the universe in order for said creator to exist? This argument of a creator suffers from [infinite regress](#). If someone counters that the creator always existed (as is common) so too could we counter that the universe has always existed in some form. Either is an unproven assumption.

If god designed the universe to support life, this means that god itself has features that lead to the creation of life. The same argument therefore applies to the higher level - it follows that God was created in order to create life. And this God-creator was itself designed to create life, and so on and so forth. If he was not, and has always existed, one could equally say the universe has always existed.

## **Poor explanation**

*Main Article: [Ultimate 747 gambit](#)*

God supposedly is an [explanation](#) for fine tuning. However, [God is a bigger mystery](#) than the one we seek to explain. A reasonable explanation would depend on *known* entities, rather than using one mystery to explain another.

Even if we accept the apologist's possibly explanations, [God](#), [brute fact](#) and chance have equal explanatory value (which is about zero). In this case, we may use [Occam's razor](#) and discard the God hypothesis.

In cases where explanations are poor, not predictive or unverifiable, it is perfectly legitimate to say "we don't know why or how!" Theists, and humans generally, often have an extreme aversion to the statement "[I don't know](#)".

*"Could you even blame me, if I had answered at first, that I did not know, and was sensible that this subject lay vastly beyond the reach of my faculties? You might cry out sceptic and railler, as much as you pleased: but having found, in so many other subjects much more familiar, the imperfections and even contradictions of human reason, I never should expect any success from its feeble conjectures, in a subject so sublime, and so remote from the sphere of our observation.<sup>[21]</sup>"*

Believing that the whole universe exists for our benefit is consistent with our **anthropocentrism**, but it has not been justified by evidence. Previous beliefs, like the Earth is at the centre of the solar system have similarly turned out to be incorrect.

*"The theistic explanation for cosmological fine tuning [says] I know why it is like that. It is because I was going to be here, or we were going to be here. But there is nothing in our experience of the universe that justifies the kind of flattering story we like to tell about ourselves."*

— **Sean Carroll**<sup>[11]</sup>

### **Was fine tuning necessary for the designer to exist?**

The designer of those properties would presumably exist in a state where the fine tuning parameters did not apply. Therefore any properties deemed to be necessary for life can't be necessary for existence in the first place, as the designer can exist without them and is allegedly "alive". The argument is self-refuting.

*"Why did God issue just those natural laws and no others? If you say that he did it simply from his own good pleasure, and without any reason, you then find that there is something which is not subject to law, and so your train of natural law is interrupted. If you say, as more orthodox theologians do, that in all the laws which God issues he had a reason for giving those laws rather than others -- the reason, of course, being to create the best universe, although you would never think it to look at it -- if there was a reason for the laws which God gave, then God himself was subject to law, and therefore you do not get any advantage by introducing God as an intermediary."*

— **Bertrand Russell**

### **Begging the question**

For the fine tuning argument to make any sense, one has to start with the assumption that humanity is *not* an accident, i.e. that it has a



purpose (such as to result in life), which [begs the question](#) of an intelligent agent that gives it a purpose. Another way apologists beg the question is by asserting the parameters were "selected" or "carefully dialed" as a premise to their argument: selected parameters imply a selector i.e. God.

*"Scientists have come to the shocking realization that each of these numbers have been carefully dialed to an astonishingly precise value - a value that falls within an exceedingly narrow, life-permitting range."*

— [William Lane Craig](#)<sup>[6]</sup>

What scientists have actually found is that if the properties of the universe were slightly different, it would result in an extremely different result. When scientists speak of "fine tuned constants", they don't (usually) mean it literally.

## Argument from poor design

Main Article: [Argument from poor design](#)

Some philosophers have noted that the fine tuning argument is not a very good argument for the existence of God but rather a very good argument for the non-existence of God.

Only upon the assumption of atheism do we really need these exact values. For only these values allow the formation of life to occur without God and without any outside influences.

The fine-tuning argument is actually therefore a great argument for [atheism](#), which theists are wrongly claiming as evidence for God.

"The universe looks exactly as it should look if there is no God. How amazing is that exactness? Therefore God exists." -- If the universe looked as if it couldn't exist only by chance, theists would and do claim God exists in that case as well. The universe either cannot happen naturally and therefore God did it, or the universe can happen naturally and what an amazing feat that is and therefore God did it. This results in a [Brian's Paradox](#).

### ***The universe is larger than necessary***

*"[A] universe that produced us by chance would have to be enormously vast in size and enormously old, so as to have all the room to mix countless chemicals countless times in countless places so as to have any chance of accidentally kicking up something as complex as life. And that's exactly the universe we see: one enormously vast in size and age."*

— [Richard Carrier](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

If there were a God, rather than needing 70 sextillion stars and 13.75 billion years, there would only be a need for one planet, rather than having more planets than there are grains of sand on all the beaches of Earth. The only reason this universe needs to be this vast and this old is if life occurs randomly without any intelligent design. If life occurs only by happenstance, then any life that exists should exist in an amazingly vast universe just to allow the chemicals needed to kick up life enough chances to happen to kick up something as complex as life.

*"Even if God created a universe consisting of only one organism, the rest of that universe would exist to make that one organism possible."* <sup>[22]</sup>

The rest of the universe is clearly not necessary. God could just have created the solar system.

***The universe is largely hostile to life***

It may be useful to realize that the vast majority of the universe is uninhabitable by any form of life, albeit human life. If there are so many regions of space, and indeed our own planet, that are uninhabitable by life, then why should we call the universe "fine-tuned"?

*"A godless universe would also only produce life rarely and sparingly, and that's also what we see: by far most of the universe is lethal to life (being a deadly radiation filled vacuum) and by far most of the matter in the universe is lethal to life (constituting stars and black holes on which no life can ever live)."*

— [Richard Carrier](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

The Earth's total mass is  $5.9736 \times 10^{24}$  kg while the estimated total biomass on Earth is around  $7 \times 10^{13}$  kg. This means that the percentage of life on Earth is  $1.17182269 \times 10^{-9}$ . That is .00000000117%. The Earth, let alone the universe, is hardly fine tuned for life. Man has created and tested <sup>[23]</sup> much more finely tuned mediums for simple life in the form of specialized agar solutions that support life/medium ratios far greater than .00000000117%. Also, Earth was formerly not capable of supporting life and will one day be incapable of supporting life. If it was designed to support life, we might expect it to have always been life supporting. <sup>[18]</sup>

***God created details that are unnecessary for life***



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

### Meson

There are more elementary particles than are necessary for life. For example, mesons are extremely rare in the solar system and apparently serve no role in life.

There are also an over-abundance of worm and insect species, which would be unnecessary if human life was the goal of fine tuning.

## **Omnipotent God could create life anywhere**

If an [omnipotent](#) God exists, life should be able to arise under any set of circumstances whatsoever, with infinite possibilities *even without fine tuning*. In other words, the premise "life requires fine tuning" is false. However, the argument can still work without that premise.

*"In fact, the whole argument from fine-tuning ultimately makes no sense. As my friend Martin Wagner notes, all physical parameters are irrelevant to an omnipotent God. 'He could have created us to live in a hard vacuum if he wanted.' <sup>[24]</sup>"*

If the constants necessarily had to be what they are than that implies that there is some set of governing rules that even God must follow, that supersede his power. If God *had* to fine-tune the universe to these particular set of constants because not doing so would not have allowed him to bring life into existence (and as they claim in their argument, a different set and there's no life), then God is indeed *not* omnipotent. This is incompatible with most theistic beliefs, particularly the [Abrahamic monotheistic ones](#). If there were rules that had been established that God had to work within using fine-tuning, this implies a superior deity than God.

### ***Lack of evidence for omnipotence***

An [omnipotent](#) God could create life that didn't conform to normal physical processes and there is no particular reason to think he would deliberately limit himself. The case for supernatural intervention would be much more plausible if humans found themselves floating in the vacuum of space, on a toxic planet with no oxygen, or somewhere else where our continued survival was a complete mystery to scientists. As it is, we find life only in areas where the facts of biology tell us it can exist. This is exactly what we would expect if we were the products of natural processes, rather than the products of omnipotence.

### ***Irrelevance of fine tuning according to TAG***

To restate the argument, in the form of the [transcendental argument](#) for the non-existence of God:

Let X be "the combination of physical constants which is necessarily capable of sustaining life" and Y be "the combination of physical constants which is necessarily **incapable** of sustaining life".

1. X is necessary, in whole or part. Y is necessary, in whole or part.
2. If theism is true, then divine creation obtained the universe.
3. If divine creation is true, then all in the universe is contingent to God's act of creation, and nothing in the universe is necessary (God could have created *any* universe).
4. If theism is true, then no X or Y can be necessary or have a necessary part (from 2 and 3).
5. Theism is false (from 1 and 4).

If a theist denies premise 1, they would deny the fine-tuning argument, since the first premise of this argument is the same as the first premise of the fine-tuning argument.

In a similar form of the argument:

1. If theism is true, then divine causation obtained the universe.
2. If divine causation obtains, then all facts of the universe are contingent upon God's act of creation.
3. If theism is true, then life can arise under any possible physical condition. (from 1 and 2)
4. If theism is true, then fine-tuning is invalid. (from 3)

Maybe the transition from premise 2 to 3 requires further justification. Denote the physical constants by {X; Y; Z} and the obtainment of life by L and negation by ~.

A fact of the universe is that {X--> L; Y--> ~L; Z--> ~L}. That is, X can result in life, and Y and Z can not result in life.

Since the fact is contingent upon God's act of creation, then it is not necessary and so can be altered.

If it can be altered then the following can be true {X--> L; Y--> L; Z--> L}, such that God could make anything result in life, or life consist in any environment. Basically, X, Y, and Z are irrelevant to God if divine causation obtains.

## **Some parameters don't need fine tuning**

*"From this discussion we see that the earth is just the proper distance from the sun to maintain the right surface temperature suitable for life and the many important geologic processes! To the evolutionist the distance of the earth from the sun is a strange accident, but to the creationist it is a marvelous testimony of God's planning. [\[4\]](#)"*

Some of the constants used by apologists do not require exact tuning. With regards to the [Goldilocks zone](#), the amount Earth can be distanced from the sun is approximately 37%, right out to Mars (yes, our solar system has two planets in the Goldilocks zone). The point being that the so-called precision we find, is actually not that precise in reality (this is one of the more extreme cases, most others can be changed but the difference being not as much).

If all planets were within the Goldilocks zone, apologists might have something to work with!

## Weak conclusion

The fine tuning argument concludes that an intelligent designer exists but that does not necessarily imply it is God or even supernatural. It also tells use relatively little about the attributes of the intelligent designer. The fine tuning argument therefore has a weak conclusion.

It is not necessary for the creator to be all-loving-he could be making us with the notion of torturing us for all we know. It is not necessary for the creator to be eternal-he could have fizzled out in the creation or could have died of some unfathomable cause. And it is likewise unnecessary for the creator to be [omniscient](#) and/or [omnipotent](#)-there are logical arguments against the proposition of [such contradictory attributes](#), and the being need not be all-powerful/knowing - he could just be really, really powerful and know a lot, but not everything.

Using the conclusion "the intelligent designer exists" to support the premise "an intelligent designer is omnipotent, all loving, etc" is [affirming the consequent](#).

The argument supports [no particular religion or theology](#). According to fine-tuning, [deism](#) and [polytheism](#) are just as likely as [theism](#).

## References

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14. ↑ [\[9\]](#)
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19. ↑ [\[14\]](#)
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21. ↑ [\[16\]](#)
22. ↑ [\[17\]](#)
23. ↑ [\[18\]](#)
24. ↑ Victor J. Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis*

## See also

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- [Anthropic principle](#)
- [Argument from design](#)
- [Habitable zone](#)
- [The Principle](#) (2014), a documentary supporting [geocentrism](#) and [creationism](#).

## External links

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- [Cosmology 101](#) at NASA's Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe website — This is an outstanding resource for understanding cosmological theory.
- *Fine-Tuned Deception: Say hello to the new stealth creationism* by [Sahotra Sarkar](#) (in *The American Prospect* magazine)
- [Amazed by Necessary Facts : Swinburne's Teleological Arguments](#) by [Francois Tremblay](#)
- [The Many Problems of the Fine-Tuning Argument](#) by [Francois Tremblay](#)

- [Videos refuting William Lane Craig's five \*proofs\* for God](#) from *Ed the Manic Street Preacher*
- [Theistic Anthropic Principle Refuted / A Survey of Arguments Against the Theistic Anthropic Principle](#) by Victor Gijssbers for *Positive Atheism Magazine*
- [Why "The Universe Is Perfectly Fine-Tuned For Life" Is a Terrible Argument for God](#) by Greta Christina
- [Is the Universe Fine Tuned for Life?](#) [19]
- [William Lane Craig 2 - Craig Harder \(Refuting WLC's Proofs For God, Part II\)](#) [20]
- [Refutation of the theistic anthropic principle](#), see [21]
- [The Many Problems of the Fine-Tuning Argument](#), Francois Tremblay
- [Refuting fine-tuning](#)
- M Colyvan, [Problems With the Argument From Fine Tuning](#), Synthese, July 2005, Volume 145, Issue 3, pp 325-338
- DarkMatter2525, [Atheist Comedy: Fine-Tuned Universe](#), 4 May 2011

# Kalam

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The **kalam** argument is an altered form of the [cosmological argument](#). It is intended to circumvent the [infinite regress](#) problem contained within the traditional cosmological argument by altering the [premises](#).

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## Apologetics

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[William Lane Craig](#)'s version of the kalam cosmological argument is as follows:

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
2. The [universe](#) began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe must have a cause.

The distinction between this and the traditional cosmological argument is that it distinguishes effects in general from those that have a beginning. This qualification leaves open an interesting possibility that some things in the universe might exist that never began to exist. But Craig is not that sloppy, so before we jump on this observation, we need to address the kalam argument's second premise and its support.

The kalam argument's second premise—"The universe began to exist"—is a claim that seems more of a [presupposition](#) than a fact, but watch how it is supported:

1. An actual [infinite](#) cannot exist.
2. A beginningless series of events is an actual infinite.



3. Therefore, the universe cannot have existed infinitely in the past, as that would be a beginningless series of events.

The important term here is, of course, "actual infinite." [Wikipedia](#) has the following to say about actual infinities:

*"Actual infinity is the notion that all (natural, real etc.) numbers can be enumerated in any sense sufficiently definite for them to form a set together. Hence, in the philosophy of mathematics, the abstraction of actual infinity is the acceptance of infinite entities, such as the set of all [natural numbers](#) or an arbitrary [sequence](#) of [rational numbers](#), as given objects."*

Furthermore:

*"The mathematical meaning of the term actual in actual infinity is synonymous with definite, completed, extended or existential, but not to be mistaken for physically existing. The question of whether natural or real numbers form definite sets is therefore independent of the question of whether infinite things exist physically in nature."*

## Counter-apologetics

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Overall, this argument is an example of a [proof by logic](#), where philosophers attempt to "demonstrate" god with a logical syllogism alone, devoid of any confirming evidence. Even if the premises were proven true (which has not been done), there would still be the following problems:-

1. Any pre-existing entity/entities that caused the universe do not have to be personal with a mind and will.
2. Any cause of the universe does not have to be the god of the [Bible](#). No reason is given why biblical [mythology](#) should be taken more seriously than other bronze age mythology.

## Counterargument

Let S1 = a state of affairs in which the Universe did not exist, and S2 = a state of affairs in which the Universe did exist.

The theist is trying to claim that the Universe began to exist, that is, there was a state in which there was God, "and then" there was a state in which there was the Universe. In other words, they want to say S1 "and then" S2. In order to do that, they must show that S1 and S2 are distinct. The possibilities are:

1. The Universe never began to exist
2. The Universe never existed
3. S1 and S2 follow each other in time
4. Some agent in S1 is the atemporal cause of S2

If we can eliminate all four examples, then there is no way to distinguish between the two states. If that is the case, then there is no "beginning" - no state at which the Universe began to exist, thus undermining the conclusion.

If we try to prove by contradiction that the Universe never began to exist, the contradiction becomes evident. By assuming the Universe began to exist, it rules out (1). The Universe exists, so that rules out (2). (3) is disproven by the fact that time is a property of the Universe, and therefore can't be applied outside of the Universe. (4) can't be true because Craig defines "atemporal causation" as follows:

To borrow an illustration from Kant, a heavy ball's resting on a cushion is the cause of a depression in the cushion, even if the ball has been resting on the cushion from eternity past.

However, this cannot be used to distinguish between S1 and S2 because it requires cause and effect to be simultaneous. S1 and S2 cannot be simultaneous, as the Universe would exist at the same instant that it doesn't exist - a contradiction. By assuming that the Universe began to exist, we have ruled out all explanations for how it could have begun to exist. Thus, we cannot distinguish at the moment between S1 and S2 - undermining their conclusion.

## Counterexample

There's nothing in the laws of physics which demands that the law of cause and effect be more than generalizations for interacting with the world above the quantum level.

Within quantum mechanics there seems to be real counter examples to the first premise of the argument. "Everything that begins to exist has a cause." For example, when Carbon-14 decays to Carbon-12 the radioactive decay is a perfectly random causeless event and thus though the Carbon-12 began to exist it wasn't caused to exist. Likewise, when matter and antimatter (particle-antiparticle formations) such as electron-positron creation, they can be said to have started to exist but not to have been caused to exist. While radioactive decay of particle-antiparticle formation can be predicted and serves a function, such as stabilizing the atom and equaling out the energies from two-photon interactions, there is no reason why such a thing should happen at those specific space and time coordinates. The underlying probabilities can be calculated and are extremely accurate, but alien from the classical sense of cause and effect.

Further, similar quantum considerations could have direct analogies to the Big Bang which might be causeless as well. Resolving other issues like the atemporal causality seen above as quantum phenomenon does force us to consider simultaneous instances of X and  $\sim$ X, for example where X is "[Schrodinger's cat](#) is dead". Ignoring this speculative

cosmology, the counter example suffices to disprove the premise (things can begin to exist without being caused) and thus demonstrate that the argument is unsound.

## Circularity

In Dan Barker's article [Cosmological Kalamity](#), he writes

The curious clause "everything that begins to exist" implies that reality can be divided into two sets: items that begin to exist (BE), and those that do not (NBE). In order for this cosmological argument to work, NBE (if such a set is meaningful) cannot be empty[2], but more important, it must accommodate more than one item to avoid being simply a synonym for God. If God is the only object allowed in NBE, then BE is merely a mask for the Creator, and the premise "everything that begins to exist has a cause" is equivalent to "everything except God has a cause." As with the earlier failures, this puts God into the definition of the premise of the argument that is supposed to prove God's existence, and we are back to [begging the question](#).

In other words, the set of items that do not begin to exist must be pluralized - otherwise it is just another word for God.

## Equivocation

Kalam also [equivocates](#) on the first premise when it refers to everything that "begins to exist". Presumably this premise is referring to everything around us on this planet-- everything in your house, everything on the streets, everything we see in the cosmos. However all of these things did not "begin to exist" in the same sense theists are claiming the universe "began to exist" (creation ex nihilo). According to the laws of thermodynamics, matter can neither be created nor destroyed, and everything we are familiar with is a actually reconfiguration of preexisting matter than has been around for billions of years. The atoms that comprise people, places, and planets do not "come into existence" in the same sense Kalam is claiming the universe came into existence (matter appearing from a previous state of non-being/non-existence). Rather they have always existed in some form, and the objects we see around us are merely the latest rearrangements of those atoms. So in speaking of the universe requiring a "cause" for it's existence, Kalam is not referring to it as you would an automobile, which is being "caused" by a group of laborers rearranging physical matter into the form of a car, or mountains being "caused" by the shifting of tectonic plates (also made of atoms which have been around since the big bang), but of something being caused by creation ex nihilo, which is not at all the type of creation we are familiar with in every other

circumstance. Kalam therefore is using a word game and the fallacy of equivocation on the phrase "begins to exist" to try and draw a parallel between wildly different things.

In summary: Kalam proponents believe God made the universe exist ex nihilo. But everything around us only "begins to exist" in a trivial sense, as rearrangements of preexisting, uncreated stuff. Since the universe is literally the only example of something truly "beginning to exist" from a previous state of nothingness, this means there is a sample set of one in this category, leaving no inductive support for the premise that "whatever begins to exist (ex nihilo) has a cause".

Once the argument is reformulated to take into account the hidden premises, it looks like this:

1. Every rearrangement of pre-existing matter has a cause. (supported by every observation, ever.)
2. The universe began to exist from absolute nonexistence, NOT from a rearrangement of pre-existing matter.
3. Therefore the universe has a cause.

In other words:

1. Every X has a cause.
2. The universe Y.
3. Therefore the universe has a cause.

As you can see, once the equivocation is made plain, the argument is invalid.

Additionally, while the term "universe" is commonly understood to mean "the sum of everything that exists," Kalam represents an attempt to establish the existence of something *outside* the universe. This is conceivable only in the case of a non-standard definition (which presumably involves some kind of distinction between a physical universe and some other realm external to it). In this case, the first premise becomes even more tenuous; how can one assert that *everything* that begins to exist has a cause when one believes in the existence of a realm outside of our universe with properties unlike anything we can discover through mere observation? A commonsense version of causality is not applicable here...meaning we now have a problem defining "cause" in this context!

▪ update\*

There is a further type of equivocation on the phrase "begins to exist". Premise 1 refers to things that begin to exist within time. In other words, there was a time when a thing did not exist, followed by a time when it existed. This is not the case with the universe, since

time is part of the universe. The universe is a finite age (13.8 billion years), and because time did not come into existence until after the inflation began, there is literally NO TIME at which the universe did not exist. It has existed at every point in time. Rephrasing the argument to accurately include this information, we get something like this:

Let X = "a thing which began to exist a finite time ago after a point when it did not exist"

Let Y = "a thing which has existed for a finite time, *but which exists at every point in time*"

1. Everything that is X has a cause for it's existence.
2. The Universe is Y.
3. Therefore the universe has a cause for it's existence.

Once again, equivocation is at play. Premise 1 and 2 are comparing apples and oranges. The universe has existed at every moment in time and did not begin to exist in the same way that every object in P1 began to exist, so the argument is invalid.

## Special pleading

The kalam argument seems to have been worded specifically to address the refutation of the cosmological argument, as it made the qualification that only things that begin have causes. The kalam arguer will simply state that [God](#) didn't begin, and so no regress occurs and no Creator of God is necessary.

However, this is a form of [special pleading](#) on the part of the theist. As [Richard Dawkins](#) put it, the cosmological argument makes "the entirely unwarranted assumption that God himself is immune to the regress." Whether we qualify the first premise to exclude non-beginning things (as the kalam argument does) or not (as the cosmological does), the essential question is why it is more logically defensible to claim that for the rule that everything must have a cause, an exception is made for God but not for the natural universe as a whole? Why does god not begin? It appears to be a wholly arbitrary choice.

If God not having a beginning is not a problem for Craig and other defenders of this argument, why is it a problem for the natural universe? To answer this, we must look at a further problem. This problem concerns the definition of god used in both arguments. A theologian might reply this counter argument and insist that the decision is not arbitrary, and that god must be allowed to have these attributes that the kalam argument seems to imply. He may say that the argument is an attempt to show the need for there to be a God that has the attributes that we cannot find in the universe. He might say that because we know that everything in the universe needs a cause and that the idea of infinite time is nonsense, there must be this being with these unique attributes. That is, there must be this being that does not begin, has no creator, and is thus able to create the universe. But this is just a bald assertion. The lack of human imagination when it comes to solving

mysteries at the boundaries of current knowledge is not a good reason to invoke a hypothetical entity with mysterious powers that enable it to be immune from paradoxes.

The God hypothesis is not only unnecessary, it is not [parsimonious](#). In order to explain something apparently designed and which cannot create itself, a being is conjured into existence which would require even more unlikely explanation.

The kalam argument attempts to circumvent the problem of infinite regress but steps right into the problem of special pleading so is no better off.

## Why only one cause?

In the construction of a house, there may be twenty people involved. There may be a large amount and wide variety of materials. There must be an appropriate location, and a diverse set of conditions that allowed the entire process to take place. Yet, the first premise would have us believe that all of this comprises just one "cause." This fails even on the most basic intuitive level, and even when it involves an object with which we are intimately familiar. Discussing something as foreign to our intuitions as the beginning of time would seem to compound the problem further.

However, even if we grant that each "thing" in the universe has exactly one cause, and that postulating an uncaused cause is sufficient to explain the origin of all things, it still would not follow that there could be only one uncaused cause. There could be several such influences working in concert, as [polytheists](#) would have us believe. There could be millions of uncaused causes that began separately but whose creations have since intermingled to form the universe we have now. In short, it isn't clear why anyone should suggest "a cause" rather than an unknown number of them - unless, of course, one's goal is to support an ideology that claims a singular creator for other reasons.

## Fallacy of Composition

In the first premise, Craig declares "everything that begins requires a cause," and goes on to place the universe at the same logical level as its contents.

In an article titled [Cosmological Kalamity](#), [Dan Barker](#) writes:

The first premise refers to every "thing," and the second premise treats the "universe as if it were a member of the set of "things." But since a set should not be considered a member of itself, the cosmological argument is comparing apples and oranges.

See [Russell's paradox](#) for issues that arise from allowing a set to be a member of itself. Also see the [Fallacy of composition](#) for issues with properties of all of the parts being true for the whole. Describing the way physical objects within the universe behave relies on induction and physical laws, neither of which apply in the absence of a spacetime

universe. Everything we are familiar with is an object within a set (the universe). It is a fallacy of composition to assert that the properties of things we are familiar with (objects within the set) are also properties of the set as a whole (the universe). Example: "Each part of an airplane has the property of being unable to fly. Therefore the airplane has the property of being unable to fly." The conclusion doesn't follow because the only way to determine whether the airplane has the property of being able to fly or not would be to get outside the plane (set) and then make observations. Unfortunately we are stuck inside the universe, so any conclusions we can draw about individual components of the universe (within the set) do not necessarily apply to the set as a whole.

## False Dichotomy

The Cosmological argument does not prove that the cause was a supernatural cause, rather than a natural one. More nature (and natural processes) plausibly exist beyond our current ability to perceive.

## So what

See also: [Which god?](#)

Although some other variation of the Kalām argument or Cosmological argument may be internally consistent even if all the terms given are agreed upon by all parties concerned, the argument actually makes no effort to demonstrate anything tangible in nature regarding the manifestation of a God. An example analogous to the Kalām argument would be a geometry proof on some type of polygon. Even though the entire table of proofs is totally internally consistent, it does not demonstrate that the actual polygon exists in nature. An exhaustive effort to prove all the angles of a triangle will always add up to 180 degrees says nothing about whether or not triangles exist.

Even if you accept Kalām, it does not distinguish between a timeless multiverse, a timeless deity, or any other timeless process that might give rise to a universe.

## External links

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- [Wikipedia:Kalam cosmological argument](#)
- [http://www.strongatheism.net/library/atheology/incoherency\\_of\\_divine\\_creation/](http://www.strongatheism.net/library/atheology/incoherency_of_divine_creation/)
- <http://www.strongatheism.net/library/atheology/>
- [http://www.strongatheism.net/library/counter\\_apologetics/](http://www.strongatheism.net/library/counter_apologetics/)
- [The Journeyman Heretic: On the Kalam Cosmological Argument](#)
- [Why do people laugh at creationists? \(part 37\) William Lane Craig: Thunderf00t's video on Lane Craig's version of the Kalam Cosmological Argument](#)

<http://fatfist.hubpages.com/hub/Leibniz-Kalam-Cosmological-Argument-REFUTED-William-Lane->

[Craig](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCCF97F3B92DF3CB8) <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCCF97F3B92DF3CB8> (TheoreticalBullshit/Scott Clifton's objection to the Cosmological Kalam Argument, and his fallacious responses from William Lane Craig)

## Uncaused cause

This argument-related article is a [stub](#). You can help out by [expanding it](#).

As formulated by [Thomas Aquinas](#), the **uncaused cause** argument is stated as follows:

"Nothing is caused by itself. Every effect has a prior cause. This leads to a regress. This has to be terminated by a first cause, which we call [God](#)."

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## Counter-apologetics

Many of the responses to the [Unmoved mover](#) argument also apply to this one:

### Self-contradiction

One can argue that the conclusion "God is the first cause" contradicts the premise "everything has a cause", and that the first cause argument is therefore self-contradictory.

It can, however, be restated as a [reductio ad absurdum](#), to make the contradiction a desirable feature:

1. Premise: every event has a cause.
2. Premise: there can be no [infinite](#) regress.
3. Premise: there exists some event  $e_0$ .
4. From (1) and (3), it follows that  $e_0$  has a cause  $e_1$ , which in turn has a cause  $e_2$ , and so on, in an infinite regress.
5. From (2) we know that there can be no infinite regress, which contradicts (4).
6. Therefore, at least one of the premises must be false.

If we reject premise 1, that every event has a cause, then there must be at least one uncaused cause, which can be called "God".



## Why call it God?

See also: [Which god?](#)

Even if we accept the argument from first cause, the conclusion is still problematic: the word "God" carries a lot of undesirable cultural baggage, denoting an intelligent being. If the ultimate cause of our universe turns out to be, say, a random vacuum fluctuation, then that would be "God" by Aquinas's definition, but to call this phenomenon "God" would be misleading. It also can be noted that if for some reason there did have to be a first cause, we don't know what it was or enough about it to give it attributes other than being the first cause, which would make calling it and assuming it is God an argument from incredulity or the "[God of the gaps](#)" idea.

## Argument from incredulity

To say that because we currently observe cause and effect relationships occurring in space-time, the universe itself must have had a first cause is assuming something that no one knows. Before the big bang time and causality could not be said to exist at least in the way that we perceive it, and so to make assumptions about the behavior of matter prior to time is pure speculation. Simply because one cannot conceive of something happening without a cause, does not mean that we can assume everything needs a cause. The logic fails as soon as we attempt to precede the Planck time, after which nothing can accurately be said about the relationship of cause and effect. It is much the same as saying that order and design must mean there was a designer, just because as far as you can tell this is the case with things that humans design. You are saying you cannot fathom a natural process that would explain what you are trying to explain and so you assume that nature must abide by your narrow understanding of order and design. One's narrow understanding of cause and effect based on their current concept of time does not mean that before time was as it is today their narrow views still apply.

## Other counterarguments

1. [Who created God?](#)
2. Pairs of virtual particles are created (and annihilated) all of the time, in vacuum, out of literally nothing, with no prior cause. This contradicts Aquinas's premise. (Whether this is a valid counterargument is debatable. The Casimir effect is poorly understood; it is nondeterministic but statistically predictable. If this is a valid counterargument, then you could equally say that the fact that your coin flip turned up heads rather than tails is also a valid counterargument.)
3. Even if there is an infinite regress of causes, so what? The human mind is uncomfortable with the concept of infinity, but reality has no obligation to make us comfortable.

4. If they claim that with an infinite past, we could never get to now, flip the infinity: Does an infinity of seconds not stretch forward into the future, eternally? Starting from an infinite future, can you go a second before that, and a second before that, ad infinitum, and get to now?
5. It is simpler to assume that matter and energy are infinite (as neither can be created or destroyed), than to assume that a god that created them is infinite. (See [Occam's razor](#))
6. This argument is also using the fallacy of composition. Since one (or all, or any number) of parts need a cause inside the universe, and then applying this to the universe as a whole is simply a fallacy.

## Unmoved mover

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As formulated by [Thomas Aquinas](#), the **unmoved mover** argument is stated as follows:

"Nothing moves without a prior mover. This leads us to a regress, from which the only escape is [God](#). Something had to make the first move, and that something we call God."

This argument is one of the *Quinque viæ*, "**Five Ways**", or "**Five Proofs**".

## Counter-apologetics

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Many of the responses to the "[uncaused cause](#)" argument also apply to this one:

1. If *nothing* moves without a prior mover, then God must need a prior mover, as well. Otherwise God is nothing, which contradicts the conclusion. Thus, either the premise is untrue, in which case the argument is [unsound](#), or the conclusion doesn't follow, in which case the argument is [invalid](#). In fact, as stated, the argument is clearly [self-contradictory](#).
2. [Who created God?](#)
3. [Which god?](#) The word "God" carries a lot of undesirable cultural baggage, denoting an intelligent being. If the ultimate cause of our universe turns out to be, say, a random [quantum](#) fluctuation, then that would be "God" by Aquinas's definition, but to call this phenomenon "God" would be very misleading.
4. Two bodies at rest will start to move towards each other due to gravity. They can be each other's first mover. Therefore, the prior mover requirement is unnecessary.
5. Pairs of [virtual particles](#) are created (and annihilated) all of the time, out of literally nothing. These particles affect each other's motion, thus disproving Aquinas's premise. [Not all events necessarily have causes](#).

6. More exotically, if time were [circular](#) (i.e., if time repeated every so often, so that the year 1 were also the year ten trillion and one), then every motion could have a prior cause without infinite regress. This does not seem to be the case, though.
7. Even if there is an [infinite regress](#) of causes, so what? The human mind is uncomfortable with the concept of [infinity](#), but reality has no obligation to make us comfortable.

## See also

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- [Principle of sufficient reason](#)

## Why is there something rather than nothing?

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The philosopher Richard Swinburne argued for a version of this argument

**"Why is there something rather than nothing?"** is an argument for God that seeks for an "explanation" of the overall existence of the universe. According to the [principle of sufficient reason](#), each object in the universe has a cause or explanation that justifies why every particular is the way it is. This leads to a chain of associated causation or explanations. The argument is based on arguing the *entire chain* of causes requires a separate cause. Since an original cause or ultimate explanation is required, it is concluded that God exists.

This sidesteps the need to address the problem of [infinite regress](#). This form of argument is related to the [cosmological argument](#) and [kalam](#) in that they trace the universe or particular phenomena back to first causes. David Parfit wrote: <sup>[1]</sup>

*"No question is more sublime than why there is a Universe: why there is anything rather than nothing."*

The answer to this question hinges on what constitutes an "[explanation](#)".

*"Concede that atheism's greatest weakness is its inability to explain where existence came from.<sup>[2]</sup>"*

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## Hume's argument

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Portrait of David Hume

[David Hume](#) suggested a variant of the [cosmological argument](#) in his book [Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion](#):

1. Nothing can cause itself
2. From (1), [everything that exists has a cause](#).
3. The chain of previous causes is either infinite or finite
4. Each cause only explains its immediate effect
5. From (2), the entire chain of causes, either infinite or finite, requires a separate explanation for existence, rather than any alternative or nothing at all. "What was it, then, which determined Something to exist rather than Nothing, and bestowed being on a particular possibility, exclusive of the rest?"
6. There are no other external causes, chance is a word without [philosophical] meaning.
7. From (5) and (6): "We must, therefore, have recourse to a [necessarily existent Being](#), who carries the REASON of his existence in himself, and who cannot be supposed not to exist, without an express contradiction"

This allows the possibility of [infinite regress](#) but claims the entire chain of causes requires a cause.

## Swinburne's inductive cosmological argument

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[Richard Swinburne](#) updated the cosmological argument in his book [The Existence of God](#) by rejecting some of the original premises and arguing that the universe as a whole requires an explanation. His conclusions are modest in that he claims only to have produced evidence that God exists (what he calls a C-inductive argument) rather than a stand alone argument for God. <sup>[3]</sup> The argument resembles an inversion of the [ultimate 747 gambit](#) except that it assumes [divine simplicity](#):

1. A scientific explanation of the universe only produces theories or "brute facts" but no "explanation".
2. The universe is complex.
3. [God is simple](#) or less complex than the universe.
4. God is more likely to occur spontaneously than the universe.
5. Therefore, if we require the spontaneous occurrence of an entity, the occurrence of God is preferred.
6. It is possible that God is the explanation of the universe.

*"Theism does not make [certain phenomena] very probable; but nothing else makes their occurrence in the least probable, and they cry out for explanation. A priori, theism is*

*perhaps very unlikely, but it is far more likely than any rival supposition. Hence our phenomena are substantial evidence for the truth of theism"*

According to Swinburne, there are two forms of explanation: inanimate explanation and personal (or intentional) explanation. Swinburne claims that explanations are either based on inanimate objects or intentional agents. <sup>[4]</sup> For Swinburne, an explanation has reached finality when it is based on the intentions of a conscious agent. An intentional agent implies certain expectations about the universe: that it manifests order, is comprehensible, and favours the existence of beings that can comprehend it. Natural law cannot be explained in terms of natural law.

## Argument from the world as an interacting whole

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Main Article: [Argument from the world as an interacting whole](#)

The argument claims that neither the parts of the universe nor the whole universe is self sufficient or self-explanatory. An explanation is required and the explanation is a designer of a "unifying efficient cause".

## Counter arguments

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### The universe does not need an explanation of this kind

Main Article: [Explanation](#)

There is no basis for the distinction between inanimate or intentional explanations. All instances of intentionality may be explained in terms of natural/inanimate physical laws. Therefore, Swinburne's argument is special case of a [teleological argument](#). An explanation should really relate the phenomena to everyday or direct experience. Unless Swinburne has routine direct experience of divine phenomena, he has not provided an explanation. If anyone has routine direct experience of divine phenomena, they have no need of this argument.

David Hume wrote that each state of the universe is explained by a progression from the previous state and no other explanation is required:

*"In...a chain...or succession of objects, each part is caused by the part which preceded it, and causes that which succeeded it. Where then is the difficulty? But the whole, you say, wants a cause. I answer that the uniting of several parts into a whole like the uniting of several distinct countries into a kingdom, or several distinct members into one body, is performed merely by an arbitrary act of the mind and has no influence on the nature of things. Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable, should you afterwards ask me*

*what was the cause of the whole twenty. This is sufficiently explained in explaining the cause of the parts."*

This was also echoed by [Paul Edwards](#): <sup>[5]</sup>

*"The demand to find the cause of the series as a whole rests on the erroneous assumption that the series is something over and above the members of which it is composed."*

Swinburne accepts that the existence of the universe might be a "brute fact". However, Swinburne rejects this counter argument, saying a finite set of events requires an initial cause outside this set of events (assuming time is not [circular](#)). He claims that if the universe is of infinite age:

*"what will be inexplicable is the non-existence of a time before which there was no universe"*

Although non-occurrences of hypothetical phenomena do not normally require an explanation.

It is unreasonable to keep asking for explanations of phenomena, and explanation of explanations, and so on to infinity. We must stop somewhere. We do not need to accept Swinburne's assertion that the terminus of explanation is an intelligent agent. Assuming an explanation requires a "conscious agent" is [begging the question](#).

## Weak conclusion

Main Article: [The first cause implies God exists](#)

Swinburne's argument is only intended as evidence for a cause and not a complete argument for God. Mackie claims that even after the evidence of Swinburne is considered, "the hypothesis of divine creation is very unlikely." <sup>[6]</sup> Swinburne's argument makes certain theistic models, such as the traditional conception of God, less likely to be an explanation.

## God is complex

Main Article: [Ultimate 747 gambit](#)

The argument asserts [divine simplicity](#) but this is impossible since [intelligence](#) implies [complexity](#).

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

The argument does not imply any particular religion or God. It also does not rule out polytheism or pantheism.

Swinburne argues that other God hypotheses have even lower probabilities of occurrence.

## The universe might be necessarily existent

The universe may necessarily have the property of existence. It may be that it could not exist in any other state. Creation may have been [non-contingent](#).

## Complexity and probability do not apply to divine concepts

It is possibly invalid to apply concepts such as complexity or probability of occurrence to God. They need to be established by direct experience with divine phenomena to establish their validity.

## A-priori arguments cannot establish matters of fact

Main Article: [Proof by logic](#)

Overall, this argument is an example of a [proof by logic](#), where philosophers attempt to "demonstrate" god with a logical syllogism alone, devoid of any



confirming evidence. This is arguably inappropriate for establishing matters of fact.

## Creation and begging the question

Saying the universe is a "creation" is [begging the question](#) because a premise automatically implies the conclusion.

## Something existing proves God is personal

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*"The fact of creation also lets us know that the Creator is not just a powerful, impersonal force but is a thinking Being that made a conscious choice between creating and not creating. [\[7\]](#)"*

This assumes things about God that the apologist has not yet established, such as: did God have a choice about creating the universe? Is it impossible for an "impersonal"/deist mind to make choices?

## References

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1. [↑](#) [\[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) [\[2\]](#)
3. [↑](#) [\[3\]](#)
4. [↑](#) [\[4\]](#)
5. [↑](#) Paul Edwards, The Cosmological Argument, 1959
6. [↑](#) Mackie, J. L., 1982, The

Miracle of  
Theism, Oxford:  
Clarendon Press.

7. [↑](#) [\[5\]](#)

## See also

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- [Argument from contingency](#)
- [Leibniz cosmological argument](#)

## External links

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- [Explanation](#) on Wikipedia

# Argument from admired religious scientists

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The **argument from admired religious scientists** exists in several forms:

- "Isaac Newton, Galileo, Louis Pasteur, and other great [scientists](#) were [religious](#), therefore it is possible to be both a [believer](#) and a scientist."
- "Isaac Newton, Galileo, Louis Pasteur, and other great scientists were religious, therefore there is no conflict between [religion](#) and [science](#)."
- "[Francis Collins](#), Kenneth Miller, and other esteemed scientists believe in [God](#). Are you saying you're smarter than they are?"
- "Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, Galileo, and others were [creationists](#). Therefore creationism is scientific."

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## Counter-apologetics

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### Religion and science

Only the first form of the argument is valid. The existence of scientists who believe in God does prove that it is possible to believe in God and still be a good practicing scientist.

The difference between the first and second forms of the argument is subtle but important: a scientist may, for instance, believe that God intervenes in the world by performing [miracles](#). However, she is expected to set aside her belief in miracles while working as a scientist: there is no objective evidence for the existence of miracles. They are therefore, at best, a highly-speculative hypothesis.

### Argument from numbers

The second form of the argument is simply [ad populum](#), an appeal to popularity. Since most people in general believe in a god, and since all scientists are people, it makes sense that a high number of scientists believe in a god, whether or not this is derived from their understanding of science.

However, this tendency toward belief does not make the assertion of any god being true.

### Argument from authority

The third form is a combination of the [argument from authority](#) and of the [argument by intimidation](#). "X is true because Y says so" is a fallacy. The truth of a statement about the world does not depend on who believes it, but *why* they believe it. And smart people can still believe things that aren't true. Newton, for instance, was a believer in [astrology](#) and [numerology](#) and was even an [alchemist](#).

The fact that a person is an expert in one field does not grant expertise in unrelated fields. The fact that a man is a brilliant auto mechanic does not mean that he is also an expert at baseball or cooking. Likewise, Newton's or Einstein's knowledge of physics do not give them special insight in [theology](#).

### Dead scientists and evolution

[Creationists](#) are fond of circulating lists of scientists who believe in divine creation. However, invariably most of the scientists on the list died before [Charles Darwin](#) presented his ideas. It is unfair to imply that these notable scientists would reject the theory of [evolution](#), when they never had a chance to become acquainted with it.

Organizations like the [Institute for Creation Research](#), [Answers in Genesis](#), and the [Discovery Institute](#) also make this argument by touting the academic degrees of members of their staff.

However, these scientists rarely do creationist research in their field of expertise.

Although one cannot prove this, it is likely that intelligent individuals who profess to believe in god only pretend to do so because they believe in beneficial consequences of belief but not in the

irrational dogma supporting religious beliefs. They may think that belief in god and religion represents the best way at present to preserve civilization and pass on moral, ethical and cultural norms to the next generation. This seems to be consistent with the stances of Bill and Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama who appear too intelligent to accept irrational arguments but nevertheless support religion. It is also consistent with the greater acceptance of atheists by more intelligent individuals as exemplified by the recent pro-atheist statement made by Queen Elizabeth regarding the value and worth of non-believing British citizens.

## Scientists are less likely to believe in God

Although most people do believe in God, numerous surveys have shown that scientists tend to be far *less* likely to believe in God than the general public.

A 1996 survey in *Nature* indicated that 60.7% of randomly selected scientists express disbelief or doubt concerning the existence of God. Even more striking, however, was a 1998 survey that focused on members of the [National Academy of Sciences](#). This survey discovered that only 7% of these members of the highest tier of scientific achievement believed in a personal God, while 72.2% were willing to state that they personally disbelieved in such a God.

The bottom line seems to be that the more highly trained a person is in science, the less likely they are to believe in God.

As a counter-point to lists of creationists who doubt evolution, the [National Center for Science Education](#) has produced their own list, known as "[Project Steve](#)."

## The History of Science

Much of the weight of the argument vanishes when one understands the history of science. [Richard Carrier](#) and others have argued that religion and naturalism have always been in conflict and that science has simply won at this point. Famous scientists of the past were theists but they were theists because that was a reasonable conclusion one could draw from the evidence at hand. The Roman scientist Galen for example argued against the idea evolution (different from the Darwinian sense) by referring to the amazing designs of humans with references to valves, pumps, and ropes. And that from a natural standpoint this was an acceptable conclusion one could draw from the evidence. Galen's god was not all-powerful or perfect because bones were breakable and tradeoffs had to be made, and his beliefs were proportioned to the bulk of the evidence. Throughout history the evidence was such that reasonable people could be theist based on the evidence. Finally after Darwin, the endpoint to a functional epistemology was atheism rather than a rational deism. As such many historical scientists might well have been atheists had they have the evidence we had today. It is quite telling that the vast majority of top scientists before Darwin were theists and the vast majority after Darwin were atheists.

The lists of scientists therefore could simply be endemic of the most reasonable conclusion to draw from the evidence we had at some particular point in time.

## External links

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[\*Leading scientists still reject God\*](#)

## Argument from justice

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The argument from justice is based on the alleged need for consequences to human actions and concludes that an [afterlife](#) must exist. The argument is an [appeal to emotion](#) and [wishful thinking](#) because it exploits human desire for justice and security. The argument is related to the [Moral argument](#) because they both depend on the existence of [absolute morality](#).

The concept is similar to [Karma](#) which supposes our actions influence our future through spiritual processes. In the Myth of Er, [Plato](#) argued that human actions have inescapable consequences, the immortality of the soul and justice in the afterlife.

In Christianity and Islam, the afterlife of a person is usually considered to be either [heaven](#) or [hell](#). Infinite reward and infinite punishment are not suitable for a life containing a mixture of good and evil, so a finite state of punishment may exist, such as [Purgatory](#).

" *'But what will become of men then?' I asked him, 'without God and immortal life? All things are permitted then, they can do what they like?'* "

— Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*

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## Formal statement

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1. People do good and evil actions.
2. People are not necessarily held accountable or rewarded in this life.
3. People are held accountable or rewarded for their actions.
4. Therefore an afterlife exists in which people are rewarded or punished depending on their actions.

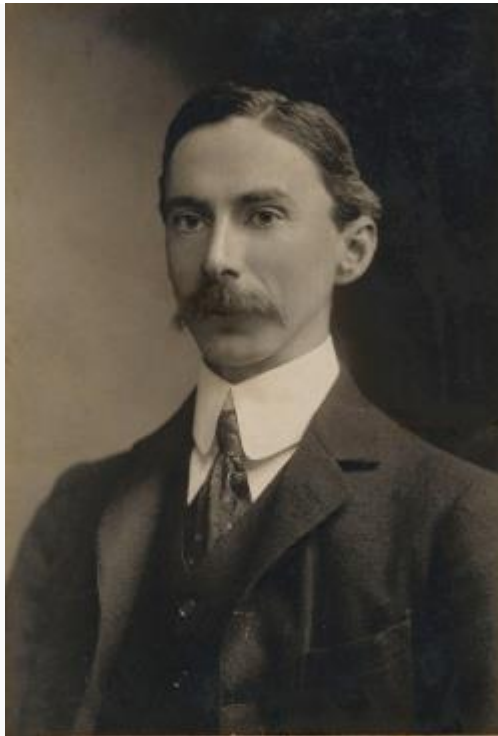
Presumably, the standard of justice used here is human morality. If the argument is based on divine morality, the argument is [begging the question](#) by assuming a particular religion is true.

## Criticism

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1. [Absolute morality](#) does not exist but is a human construct we use to subjectively describe actions.
2. The premise that there must be consequences to human actions is not supported by any evidence and is a case of [wishful thinking](#).
3. The afterlife may also contain injustice.
4. The argument depends on wrong actions being punished. According to some Christians, [salvation](#) depends on [faith not works](#) - this doctrine is [incompatible](#) with the argument from justice. The possibility of being born again, attaining salvation or forgiven by God apparently enables a person to escape the consequences of actions (unless [Purgatory](#) exists).
5. The concept of [heaven](#) and [hell](#), which are supposedly infinite reward and [infinite punishment](#), are not suitable for finite human actions and are therefore not just. Therefore, the argument from justice *disproves* heaven and hell.
6. The alternative of [reincarnation](#) based on a person's actions is ignored.

### **Bertrand Russell's argument against the existence of justice**



Bertrand Russell in 1907

In his essay [Why I Am Not a Christian](#), [Bertrand Russell](#) says that we can only know if justice exists based on the available evidence here on Earth. All available evidence indicates that there is no perfect justice.

*Then there is another very curious form of moral argument, which is this: they say that the existence of [God](#) is required in order to bring justice into the world. In the part of this universe that we know there is great injustice, and often the good suffer, and often the wicked prosper, and one hardly knows which of those is the more annoying; but if you are going to have justice in the universe as a whole you have to suppose a future life to redress the balance of life here on earth. So they say that there must be a God, and there must be Heaven and Hell in order that in the long run there may be justice. That is a very curious argument. If you looked at the matter from a scientific point of view, you would say, "After all, I only know this world. I do not know about the rest of the universe, but so far as one can argue at all on probabilities one would say that probably this world is a fair sample, and if there is injustice here the odds are that there is injustice elsewhere also." Supposing you got a crate of oranges that you opened, and you found all the top layer of oranges bad, you would not argue, "The underneath ones must be good, so as to redress the balance." You would say, "Probably the whole lot is a bad consignment"; and that is really what a scientific person would argue about the universe. He would say, "Here we find in this world a great deal of injustice, and so far as that goes that is a reason for supposing that justice does not rule in the world; and therefore so far as it goes it affords a moral argument against deity and not in favor of one." Of course I know that the sort of intellectual arguments that I have been talking to you about are not what really moves people. What really moves people to believe in God is not any intellectual argument at all. Most people believe in God because they have been taught from early infancy to do it, and that is the main reason. Then I think that the next most powerful reason is the wish for safety, a sort of feeling that there is a big brother who will look after you. That plays a very profound part in influencing people's desire for a belief in God.*

## Heaven precludes genuine charity

Main Article: [Heaven precludes genuine charity](#)

If there is an omnipotent and perfectly just God and an everlasting reward, there is no reason to act morally except to secure one's own well-being in the afterlife, i.e. loving your brother can only be a rational means to one's own ends not the well-being of one's brother.

## See also

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- [Moral argument](#)
- [Argument from the meaning of life](#)

## External Links

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- [Arguments from Atheism](#) article.
- [Just-world hypothesis](#), cognitive bias that supports this argument

## Divine command theory

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**Divine command theory** suggests that any statement about [ethics](#) is actually a statement about the attitudes and desires of [God](#). That is, it claims that God's commands and [morality](#) are identical. To suggest that morality can exist without God is therefore a contradiction.

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## Criticism

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### Begging the question

*Main Article: [Begging the question](#)*

Divine command theory cannot prove that God is the source of morality because that is precisely what it assumes. That is, divine command theory assumes that whatever God commands must be moral (in fact, in most cases it defines morality that way). However, it's not clear that I am morally required to do something just because God commands it. I might want to obey God in order to escape punishment, but this is a matter of my own selfish interest and not an objective moral obligation. Similarly, it's not clear why I should assume that there's no other possible source of morality.

Unless divine command theory can first demonstrate that it is the most appropriate view of ethics, one cannot assume that it is correct to prove anything else.

### Non-standard usage of the words "good" or "moral"

Most people have an intuitive sense of what it means for an action to be good or to have a moral obligation, and this set of moral attitudes typically pre-dates or is independent of any religious beliefs. To define a new meaning for "morality" as meaning what God wants, then to act as if this is the same as the everyday conception of morality, is to commit an [equivocation](#) fallacy. Morality is either a system



for determining which actions are right or wrong, or a desire to obey the will of God. It can't mean both things at the same time, unless one first demonstrates that both meanings are equivalent.

## **Divine command theory is not an objective system of morals**

See also: [Euthyphro dilemma](#)

Divine command theory implies that whatever God commands must be the morally correct course of action. Therefore, if/when God endorses genocide, infanticide, animal sacrifice, slavery, or rape, those things are good, whereas if/when he forbids eating certain foods or working on certain days or having certain kinds of kinky sex, those things immediately become bad. This makes divine command theory a subjective theory of morals, one which is arbitrary and can change at God's whim.

One way of countering this argument is to say "God wouldn't do that", but this doesn't help at all. For one, in many religious traditions he does do such things. For another, if God is the source of morality, he can do whatever he wants and it would still be just as "good" as anything else.

[Thomas Aquinas](#) believed that God's commands come from his own (unchanging?) essence and thus were not arbitrary pronouncements. This is irrelevant to the problem. Either there is a single objective, necessary code of morals that governs everything, in which case God's commands merely reflect (or fail to reflect) this standard, or else there is no such code, and so the commandments of God cannot reflect an objective morality. Either way, it gets you nowhere to say that actions are good for no other reason than because God approves of them.

### **"God is good" becomes meaningless tautology**

Theists describe God as good and loving, which is problematic primarily due to the [problem of evil](#). But setting that aside, if goodness is defined as Godly, then "God is good" is an empty statement, reducing to "God only acts in accordance with the ways God acts." Yet theists almost never *treat* "God is good" as a tautology. For example, Christians say that God-as-Jesus was being good and loving by sacrificing himself to save humankind from the wages of sin. Yet under divine command theory, God would have been exactly as good if he never sacrificed himself, or if he decided to send everyone (Christian or otherwise) to suffer eternally in Hell, or if he put everyone in Heaven, or if he turned everyone's legs into tree trunks. One cannot point to anything God does as an "example of" or "evidence for" God being good, because there is no hypothetical action God

could take that, if he did it, would *not* be an action God takes, and therefore not be "good" – indeed, maximally good – by divine-command standards.

People are told to have faith in God and to demonstrate this by, for example, [praying](#). Yet if God were to personally appear to a loyal petitioner (someone asking for God to help a sick child, say) and tell him/her that he is now sick of prayer and that he's going to punish the child out of spite, then *that* would be the maximally good action for God to have taken. Thus, extrapolating back to the present, there is no reason to trust God to do that which we humans might consider good, since his actions cannot be bound by a moral system outside himself. Even if he promises to act a certain way, his breaking the promise later would (since he did so) be the right thing for him to do.

Divine command theory cancels out most [theodicy](#). For example, a common theodicy is the free-will defense – evil must be permitted because otherwise humans would be robots, which would be bad. Apart from the other issues with this argument, it doesn't fit in the same box as divine-command theory. After all, if God did make us all robots, he would remain 100% good.

## **Divine command theory is impractical**

See also: [Which god?](#)

Whether divine command theory is true or not (and there seems to be no reason to think that it is), it is often not an effective method of settling moral dilemmas. For one, it's not clear which religious tradition is correct. For another, religious texts tend to contain many conflicting, arbitrary, or excessively specific rules. These rules rarely allow a clear method of generalizing these ideas to every possible situation, so a believer is forced to do much the same thing that an atheist does, which is to work out moral principles and ideas for herself. Often, the fact that the believer is bound to respect certain statements as absolute truth makes this process even harder, because those statements may not make good sense, or may make sense in most situations but be absurd in others. Divine command theory thus fails to provide moral guidance for much the same reason that religions often fail to provide moral guidance.

# Argument from degree

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The **argument from degree** is based the comparison of objects allegedly requiring extreme examples as a basis for a comparison.

As formulated by [Thomas Aquinas](#), the argument, also known as **Aquinas' fourth way**, is stated as follows:

*"We notice that things in the world differ. There are degrees of, say, goodness or perfection. But we judge these degrees only by comparison with a maximum. Humans can be both good and bad, so the maximum goodness cannot rest in us. Therefore there must be some other maximum to set the standard for perfection, and we call that maximum [God](#)."*

— [Richard Dawkins](#), [The God Delusion](#), 2006, pp, 78-79, excerpted in [Why There Is No God](#), The Times, Oct. 31, 2006

*"if these degrees of perfection pertain to being and being is caused in finite creatures, then there must exist a "best," a source and real standard of all the perfections that we recognize belong to us as beings. This absolutely perfect being—the "Being of all beings," "the Perfection of all perfections"—is God."*

— Strange Notions, Argument from Degrees of Perfection [\[1\]](#)

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## Counter-apologetics

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Dawkins replies:

*"That's an argument? You might as well say, people vary in smelliness but we can make the comparison only by reference to a perfect maximum of conceivable smelliness. Therefore there must exist a pre-eminently peerless stinker, and we call him God. Or substitute any dimension of comparison you like, and derive an equally fatuous conclusion."*

— Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006, p. 79

# The Argument From Goodness

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The argument from goodness is a special case of the argument from degree. In his [\*Summa Theologica\*](#), Aquinas writes:

*"The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God."*

— Thomas Aquinas, [\*Summa Theologica\*](#), question 1, article 3, objection 2

## Counter arguments

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### **"More" and "less" are not based on comparison to extreme limits**

The concepts of "more" and "less" are not based on comparing things to extreme cases. By saying, "as fire, which is the maximum heat", Aquinas scuttles his own argument: fusion reactions, which power stars (including the sun) are much hotter than fire. Aquinas, of course, did not know this, and therefore could not have based his idea of heat on the "maximum heat". Heat is defined in terms of energy and movement of atoms. Even though there is no known upper limit to heat, this does not make heat a meaningless concept.

There is no guarantee that a maximum is even logically possible, as in the cases of length or magnitude. We can tell which of two objects is longer or bigger, not by comparing to the maximum length (which would be infinite), but in the mathematical way of seeing which has leftover length when the one is taken from the other. When we compare, we are not seeing which is closer to an extreme, but rather which is in excess of the other: we take one as standard, and see if the other is above or below that standard.

Likewise, we can know what "goodness" and "perfection" (in Aquinas's sense) mean by comparing people and actions to each other subjectively, and not to some superlative standard of goodness and perfection.

## No concrete examples of perfection exist

An abstract standard of perfection can be useful without having concrete existence. For instance, we can mathematically define a perfect circle and use that as the standard for roundness. However, it is impossible to draw a perfect circle, and thus a perfect circle cannot exist. Similarly, the fact that we can imagine a perfectly good being in no way implies that that being actually exists.

## Argument from ignorance

Furthermore, the "and this we call God" part might as well say, "and this we call Bob." The argument is creating a definition of a "maximally good" thing, and then giving it a name Thomas Aquinas likes. However, a "maximally good" being is *not* what most people call "God", so the conclusion is not proof of a god, it's merely a biased choice of a name given to a particular definition of a thing for which no evidence is given that it even exists. It's basically an attempt to define God into existence by an [argument from ignorance](#) and [proof by logic](#).

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

Also, there's no reason the argument can't be applied with *evil* instead of (arbitrarily) good: "there is evil in the world, and the fact that we can perceive different standards of evil means there must be some maximal exponent of evil, and we call this supreme evil God."

Finally, even if we ignore all of the other flaws of the argument, it doesn't tell us *which* god is the real one. (Though, if the definition in the argument is strictly followed, it does allow us to rule out any gods that are not maximally good, such as those that would drown out nearly everyone on the planet.)

## See also

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- [Ontological argument](#)
- [Argument from the origin of the idea of God](#) which claims the concept of God can only be caused by God.

# Argument from desire



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*\*Argument from desire\*\*\*](#)

The Argument from Desire is an argument for the existence of God, or rather some desired object.

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## Background information

The argument is criticised by both theists and atheists alike. The Christian philosopher and apologist Thomas Aquinas, although using the argument, thought that on its own it was an insufficient argument for the existence of God. Likewise, Sigmund Freud considered God to be nothing more than a psychological illusion to fulfil innate human desires rather than an actual entity that exists.

## Argument

### CS Lewis version

The argument was promoted by [C. S. Lewis](#) and reportedly played a part in his conversion to Christianity.

*The Weight of Glory:*

*"A man's physical hunger does not prove that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes*

*of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist."*

*"In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called "falling in love" occurred in a sexless world."*

## **Wikipedia version**

p1. Humans have innate desires.

a. By "innate" we mean those desires that are universal.

b. The desire for food, the desire for companionship, the desire to enjoy beauty are innate desires in this sense

c. The desires to have a grand house or a PhD are not.

P2. All innate human desires have objects that exist.

a. We feel hunger; there is such a thing as eating. We feel sexual desire; there is such a thing as sex.

b. It would be unlikely for a race of individuals to exist who reported feeling hungry yet but did not possess food, mouths nor stomachs.

c. For every such innate desire in human experience (save one) we can identify the object.

p3. There is a desire for "we know not what" whose object cannot be identified.

a. We are never truly satisfied. For even while we satisfy our hunger, our need for companionship, love, beauty, achievement, etc.

b. The second premise aims to articulate and appeal to the concept of "longing" as expressed by the German term *Sehnsucht*.

c3. If the object of this desire does not exist in this world, it must exist in another.

## **Simplified version**

p1. Humans have innate desires.

p2. All innate human desires have objects that exist.

p3. There is an innate human desire for God.

C1. Therefore, God exists.

## **Counter arguments**

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### **False premise: Reification**

The first problem with the argument is in the second premise (simplified version). In itself, this premise is a fallacy of reification. Having a desire to fly, doesn't mean you can actually flap your arms and take off. Obviously flying isn't an innate desire in humans but it demonstrates the fallacy.

Perhaps the better example of this would be survival. Both the theist and the atheist would agree that survival is an innate desire. But there is no evidence, or any reason at all, to believe that because you don't want to die, there must be somebody out there that cannot die and will live forever. Put like this, it does seem silly, because it is.

Innate or not, desires don't prove the existence of the object of that desire.

## False Premise: Unfounded assertion

The second problem with the argument is in the third premise (simplified version). There is no innate desire for God. The existence of certain sorts of [antitheists](#) (i.e. [Christopher Hitchens](#)) more or less proves this point. It cannot be the case that "all people have a desire for God" if it is the case that "some person does not have a desire for God" or "some person has a desire for there not to be a God."

If it is the case that one can live quite comfortably and be completely content without the a belief or desire for a god, then the premise is false.

Theists may simply dispute the truth of the proposition, but arguments from analogy are sufficient to act as a counterpoint to the universal claim.

## Non-sequitur

In the Wikipedia or CS Lewis version, a problem of logical validity also arises. Jumping from "what we do not know" and "an object that cannot be identified" to "god exists" is a non-sequitur. It does not logically follow.

The only way this makes sense is if you are only renaming what we do not know 'god', in a similar manner to calling an unknown variable in algebra 'x'. However simply equating god to unknown variable 'x' is not the intelligent, self aware, all knowing, all seeing, all loving creator that theists mean when they say god exists.

## Links

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### See Also

- [Fallacy of reification](#)
- [Non sequitur](#)

### Reference

- [About Atheism, Argument from Desire](#)



- [Wikipedia:Argument from desire](#) – Wikipedia article

## Argument from the origin of the idea of God



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Trademark argument](#)



Portrait of René Descartes

The **argument from the origin of the idea of God**, also referred to as the **trademark argument** or the **cosmological-ontological argument (COA)**, is based on finding the origin of mental concepts and is a variant of the [argument from degree](#) and the [ontological argument](#).

The argument was proposed by [Descartes](#) and claimed that mental concepts originate either internally, from the mind, or externally:

*"Among these ideas, some appear to me to be innate, some adventitious, and some produced by me. For I understand what a thing is, what truth is, what thought is, and I appear to have derived this exclusively from my very own nature <sup>[1]</sup>"*

He discounts internal sources and the sensations of our senses but still considers the concept of God had an external origin:

*"All that remains for me to ask is how I received this idea of God. For I did not draw it from the senses; it never came upon me unexpectedly, as is usually the*

case with ideas of sensible things when these things present themselves [...] to the external organs <sup>[1]</sup>"

The conclusion is that this external origin is actually God.

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## Formal argument

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The argument runs as follows: <sup>[2]</sup>

1. Mental concepts exist in our minds, including the concept of "God"
2. Some are produced internally and some originate externally
3. The concept of "God" did not originate internally from the mind
4. Therefore the concept has an external cause
5. The concept "God" can only have arisen from something that resembles the concept "God"
6. Nothing exists with qualities similar to God, except God
7. Therefore the concept "God" originated from God
8. God exists

## Counter arguments

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### Concepts might be innate or invented

Main Article: [Humans are predisposed to believe in gods](#)

Disposition to believe certain concepts are innate. We interpret our sensory experience somewhat imperfectly based on our cognitive biases and the belief in a particular concept is the result. We can see examples of an

generally positive experience with more or less negative qualities, or human design with more or less flaws. It is easy to extrapolate these instances to believe in a perfect design or experience with no flaws. We do not need an example of perfection to imagine it but it does not demonstrate that perfection is possible.

A counter argument: [\[2\]](#)

*"But is that really enough? How can we think away limitation or imperfection unless we first recognize it as such? And how can we recognize it as such unless we already have some notion of infinite perfection? To recognize things as imperfect or finite involves the possession of a standard in thought that makes the recognition possible."*

Noticing imperfections is probably an innate ability in humans which is necessary to solve practical problem. If we attempt a task and fail because of our approach or our tools, the imperfections are all too obvious.

There are many examples of objects being compared based on imaginary concepts, such as their magical properties. This does not imply the concept "magic" is coherent or it was based on actual examples of the concept. The concept can be a fiction invented by humans.

## **Things with perfect attributes don't exist**

Main Article: [Argument from the attributes of God](#)

There are no other examples of objects that have a concrete and perfect attributes. We have a concept of a perfect circle but no perfect circle has a concrete existence. Therefore, the argument implies the non-existence of God.

### **Argument from ignorance**

While religious beliefs occur in many cultures, humans may have an innate disposition to belief in God. This naturalistic hypothesis is arbitrarily ignored by the argument.

What process occurs by which we become aware of God and form a concept of "God"? Without these being known, this is an [argument from ignorance](#).

## **Theologians say God is unknowable**

Many theologians have claimed that God is unknowable. <sup>[3]</sup> Therefore our concept of God is either undefined or mistaken. If God had attempted to establish the concept in our minds, he failed.

## Proof by logic

Main Article: [Proof by logic](#)

This argument is an attempt to define God into existence, calling for explanations for things that either might be explained by natural processes or do not require any explanation at all.

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

The argument supports no particular God or theology.

## Variant: knowledge of infinity

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In the physical world, we only experience finite phenomena. However, humans have knowledge of infinity. [René Descartes](#) argued that knowledge of infinity must have originated in an infinite entity. <sup>[4]</sup>

## References

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1. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>1.0</sup> <sup>1.1</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Fourth Edition), tr. Donald A. Cress
2. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>2.0</sup> <sup>2.1</sup> <sup>[1]</sup>
3. <sup>↑</sup> Brian Morley, Western Concepts of God <sup>[2]</sup>
4. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>[3]</sup>

## See also

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- [Conceptualist argument](#)
- [Transcendental argument](#)
- [Argument from degree](#) claims a concept (e.g. "perfection") requires an example of perfection to actually exist for the comparison to be made.

# Argument from divine sense

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The **argument from divine sense**, or *sensus divinitatis* (SD) holds that belief in [God](#) can be considered properly basic, requiring no external justification such as physical evidence. The consequence is that no physical evidence would be necessary to demonstrate religion, if religion is true. On it's own, *sensus divinitatis* is not an argument for the existence of God. It is sometimes used to argue that [atheists know there is a God](#).

The argument can be traced back to the early church but was largely developed by [John Calvin](#).<sup>[1]</sup> It is an attempt to justify [reformed epistemology](#). It has seen resistance from both [believers](#) and non-believers, though for different reasons. The argument eliminates any need for traditional [apologetics](#) that attempt to offer [rational](#) defences of [faith](#) and belief in God. It also eliminates traditional views of faith, encouraging a [relativist](#) position akin to "God is real for me, and that's all that matters." Additionally, [theists](#) and non-theists point out that even if the argument were [sound](#), it cannot justify [any particular God or concept of God](#) beyond what the individual claims to experience.

*"There are certain sources of belief, we taken them as "basic" and they do not require further evidential justification, such as sense-perception, memory, intuition, etc. It may be, if Christianity is true, there is another faculty, that [Aquinas](#) called sensus divinitatis. This faculty, like memory, like intuition, like sense-perception, delivers beliefs about God. If Christianity is true, this faculty is reliable and we do not require further evidence. Therefore, we do not require physical evidence, if Christianity is true. [2]"*

The argument is very similar to the claim that [religion is another way of knowing](#).

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## Basic argument

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One formulation of the basic argument from divine sense (using Christianity as an example):

1. Humans have faculties that provide the individual person with basic or [foundational](#) beliefs that do not require further justification.
2. If Christianity is true, it is very probable that humans are endowed with a cognitive faculty in addition to memory, perception, etc. which we can call the *sensus divinitatis*.
3. If humans have a *sensus divinitatis*, then Christian belief can be foundational.
4. If Christianity is true, (very probably) Christian belief can be justified, without independent evidence.

The term *sensus divinitatis* may be an attempt at obfuscation by making the concept sound far more significant than it is. It certainly sounds important but, in reality, it isn't anything more than a "god detector". Without intending to be overly polemic, the argument could also be rephrased as:

*"If God exists, then he implanted a God detector in each of us."*

[Alvin Plantinga](#) claims that that everyone has a *sensus divinitatis*, but that [sin](#) interferes with this sense. <sup>[3]</sup> He uses a slightly different conception of *sensus divinitatis* than John Calvin. According to Plantinga, it is the:

*"many sided disposition to accept belief in God (or propositions that immediately and obviously entail the existence of God) in a variety of circumstances"*

## Foundationalism premise

Main Article: [Foundationalism](#)

The underlying [premise](#) for the argument rests in the concepts of [foundationalism](#), which holds that beliefs can be divided into two categories:

1. foundational beliefs (also called basic or properly basic), which are accepted [axiomatically](#) and require no external justification;
2. all other beliefs, which are derived from foundational beliefs.

Foundationalism is not universally accepted, and competing epistemological philosophies exist which include objections to the premise of properly basic beliefs.

## Acceptance of divine sense

Those who accept this reformed epistemology assert that Christian teachings necessarily support the existence of SD and that this assertion can only be challenged on exegetical grounds. They hold that a number of passages in the [Bible](#) imply or affirm the notion that God has given everyone a mechanism for knowing and understanding his nature.

This assertion isn't accepted, to the same degree, by all Christians and additional passages from the Bible along with testimonials from believers clearly claim that God can, and does, interact with the physical world in empirically observable ways, not the least of which is the Christian doctrine that God came to earth in a physical form to deliver the most important message in Christendom. This sort of physical interaction would not be necessary if a properly basic SD existed.

[William Lane Craig](#), who uses some of the same arguments generally as Plantinga does, has been hesitant to endorse the idea of an innate "sense", and prefers the idea that there is instead an externally controlled "experience" that the believer has in encountering God. An obvious problem here is that it's not possible to objectively settle this question, especially when Christians who in theory believe similar things, find that they can't agree on the nature of the experience that they supposedly share. If the "sense" really is just a type of personal experience, then we're really talking about [a different sort of argument](#), which has its own problems.

## Sensus divinitatis is real

[John Calvin](#) argued that *sensus divinitatis* is real: <sup>[4]</sup>

*"That there exists in the human minds and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, has endued all men with some idea of his Godhead, the memory of which he constantly renews and occasionally enlarges, that all to a man being aware that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, may be condemned by their own conscience when they neither worship him nor consecrate their lives to his service."*

*"All men of sound judgment will therefore hold, that a sense of Deity is indelibly engraven on the human heart. <sup>[1]</sup>"*

This still follows the basic form of the argument: (1) God exists, (2) God "has endued all men with some idea of his Godhead", (3) we know God exists.

## Counter arguments

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### Begging the question

Main Article: [Begging the question](#)

If used to argue for the existence of God, the conclusion that God exists is also contained in a premise of the argument, making it [circular](#):

1. If Christianity is true, divine sense exists.
2. If divine sense exists, Christianity is true.

A. C. Grayling criticised Plantinga's version, saying it had the same fault of [begging the question](#):

*"It is that it rests on the fallacy of informal logic known as [petitio principii](#). Plantinga wishes to claim that we can know there is a deity because the deity has provided us with a cognitive modality, which Plantinga calls "a *sensus divinitatis*," or sense of the divine, by which we detect its existence. So, we know there is a god because that god arranges matters so that we know there is a god. The circularity is perfect, and perfectly fallacious. <sup>[5]</sup>"*

Arguably, Plantinga does not even attempt to show that *sensus divinitatis* proves God.<sup>[5]</sup>

### Weak conclusion based on unsubstantiated premises

The existence of several conditionals in the argument render it ineffective - "if Christianity is true", "very probable", "if humans have a *sensus divinitatis*". There is no evidence that *sensus divinitatis* exists. John Calvin's argument that "everyone believes in God" is a [hasty generalization](#) and a [majority argument](#).

Even if it were valid and sound, the most it could ever prove is the **possibility** that the state of affairs it presents were true - and that possibility wouldn't be exclusive to any particular religion. Removing the conditionals removes this argument from the realm of the hypothetical and places the believer back in the position of having to defend the truth of the claims they make - and that's the real purpose of this argument: it is an attempt to avoid the [burden of proof](#).

### Divine sense is assumed to be basic



A premise of the argument states that SD can be considered properly basic. Instead of acting as an argument supporting reformed epistemology, it merely assumes that position is true and moves on.

For foundationalists, the justification for considering any belief properly basic is, on the one hand, avoidance of an [infinite regress](#). Belief B is justified by B', which is justified by B'', etc. To avoid the regression, one simply accepts that some beliefs do not require justification. Those who agreed with this principle also understood that dogmatically declaring beliefs as basic is no solution, as anyone could declare any belief basic and avoid the need to justify it - in other words, something can't be properly basic just because we claim it to be so. One major objection, from Christians and non-Christians, alike, is that this argument attempts to do exactly that.

For modern foundationalists, properly basic beliefs aren't dogmatically asserted, they have an inherent justification which places them in the position of requiring no *further* justification. The defining characteristics which render a belief properly basic are consistency and reliability - to the point that questioning the justification of those beliefs is nonsensical and counter-productive. While sensory data was considered properly basic among classic foundationalists, modern foundationalists reject this notion - because our senses can be unreliable and aren't above question. Sensory data can be viewed as "near" basic, or justified by the basic notion that the information our brains process is *generally* reliable, but subject to corroboration.

## **No specific religion or theology is supported**

*Main Article: [Which God?](#)*

Yet another objection to this argument is that it doesn't create an argument that necessarily supports only Christianity. Consider the argument again, with another religion or belief replacing Christianity along with it's claim of something akin to *sensus divinitatis*. The conclusion will work for any claim which includes a method of self-confirmation.

If the basis for asserting the existence of SD is a specific interpretation of Christian scripture, then alternate interpretations render the assertion suspect and the first premise should read:

*"If this particular interpretation of Christian scriptures is correct, then humans have a *sensus divinitatis*"*

Apologists would claim that this is why the premise says "very probable" instead of "necessary" but there's no clear way to determine which interpretation can be considered "very probably" correct, if any

can. In truth, the first premise is a personal opinion which, after removing the [conditionals](#) should read:

*"My interpretation of Christian scriptures supports the existence of a sensus divinitatis"*

## Many different religions exist

This raises questions about the reliability of claims attributed to a *sensus divinitatis*. If we operate under the assumption that SD exists:

- How do we explain the lack of such claims from the non-religious?
- How do we explain contradictions between [scientific knowledge](#) and claims of divinely revealed knowledge?
- How do we explain the many inconsistent and/or contradictory claims about god/God/gods made by members of various religions - including members who profess to be of the same religion?

There are more than 1000 denominations within Christianity and there have been many other religions and sects which claim to worship the same God, rely on many of the same scriptures and have claimed rough equivalents of SD. To even the most casual observer, this situation should call the reliability of claims regarding SD into question.

*"There are more idols than realities in the world: that is my "evil eye" upon this world; that is also my "evil ear."*

— [Friedrich Nietzsche](#)

Also, beliefs that are created by a *sensus divinitatis* cannot be distinguished from beliefs that are the result of delusion or mental illness.

## Assuming the characteristics of God

The argument assumes that God would want people to know he existed but this has not been properly established. Also, it is simply assumed that divine sense is reliable and God is not a trickster. Given humans are often [wrong in their beliefs](#), we would not expect *sensus divinitatis* to be any

different. How can *sensus divinitatis* caused by either God or Satan be distinguished?

## A predisposition to believe in God proves nothing

Humans have **cognitive biases**, which sometimes leads use to perceive things that are not there and believe things that do not reflect reality. A predisposition to believe in God may be nothing more than our limited brains struggling to comprehend a godless universe. Our tendency to believe something is true **does not make it true**; in fact research into cognitive biases shows our beliefs are often unreliable! There is evidence that the human tendency to believe in divine agents is an **evolutionary adaptation**.

## Contradicted by scripture

Even the Bible contradicts the simplest view, that everyone knows about God deep down. **Psalms 14:1** says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." It seems hard to argue that anyone could say "in his heart" that there is no God while not believing that there is no God. Therefore, the Bible acknowledges that at least some atheists exist (and they are "fools" by Biblical definition).

## Reversing the argument

*Main Article: **If god wanted to be known he would provide reliable evidence***

The argument cuts both ways:

1. If Christianity is true, everyone would have *sensus divinitatis*
2. Many or all people have no *sensus divinitatis*
3. Therefore Christianity is false

## Accounting for different religions

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In response to criticism that many religions exist, apologists sometimes claim that humans were originally created with a perfect *sensus divinitatis*, but after man **sinned** by eating from the **tree of knowledge**, part of his punishment was a separation from God which rendered this divine sense unreliable.

*"Like any cognitive process, however,  
the sensus divinitatis can malfunction; as a  
result of sin, it has indeed been damage"*

— Alvin Plantinga<sup>[3]</sup>

They claim that this broken SD will be repaired,  
for "true" believers, by God. Some of those who  
would use this argument would re-write the  
relevant premise to read:

*"If humans have a properly working SD, then Christian belief can be  
foundational"*

## Counter arguments

This [ad hoc](#) explanation completely  
undermines the argument. It creates  
a [logical disconnect](#) between two premises.  
One premise refers to simply "SD" while the  
other premise adds the qualifier "**properly  
working**". This invalidates the argument and  
the conclusion cannot be reached without  
also changing the next premise to include  
the qualifier. If we modify both premises to  
reconnect the argument, the [validity](#) is  
restored, but the dilemma (*how do you  
explain inconsistencies?*) returns and the  
revised argument has new problems:

- If Christianity is true, it is very probably  
that humans are endowed with  
**a properly working SD**
- If humans have a **properly working SD**,  
then Christian belief can be foundational
- If Christianity is true, very probably  
Christian belief can be justified without  
independent evidence

The new problem is that we've added yet  
another [conditional](#) to the argument -  
*properly working* - which, without additional  
information, renders the argument even  
more ineffective. Modifying these premises

demonstrates the fundamental flaws inherent in making claims of divine [revelation](#):

- How do you distinguish SD from psychosis, delusion or wishful thinking?
- How do you know whether or not your SD is working properly?
- How do you know that your SD isn't being [intentionally manipulated by Satan](#)?
  - Wouldn't a truly evil and near-god-like being prefer to have you believe you're understanding God when you're really understanding him?

The unreliable and often contradictory nature of claims attributed to SD clearly ensure that it shouldn't be considered properly basic.

This is only exacerbated by ad hoc explanations to explain the unreliable nature of these claims which seem to be desperate attempts to avoid the obvious conclusion - there is no *sensus divinitatis*.

**Questions for believers:** The Bible is supposed to be the inspired word of God, clearly the work of men who's *sensus divinitatis* should have been functioning perfectly. This is, essentially, how believers justify the reliability of the Bible. If this is true, then the Biblical accounts of God performing, sanctioning or encouraging murder, [rape](#), genocide and human sacrifice are true and reflect God's moral character. Does your current *sensus divinitatis* give you a similar mental image of God? If not, why is yours correct?

## References

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1. ↑ <sup>1.0 1.1</sup> Prayson Daniel, [Sensus Divinitatis](#), November 5, 2013
2. ↑ Paraphrased from [Atheist Experience](#), #455, from 41:23-54:30.
3. ↑ <sup>3.0 3.1</sup> Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, p. 214. [1]
4. ↑ John Calvin, [Institutes of the Christian Religion](#), 1536
5. ↑ <sup>5.0 5.1</sup> [2]

## See also

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- [Atheists know there is a God](#)
- [Presuppositional apologetics](#)

## Argument from uniqueness

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Many monotheistic religions claim they are exclusively correct and all other religions are false. There are thousands of religions in the world and many more that are extinct, which implies that all religions are human inventions. For a religion to claim exclusive truth, apologists attempt to establish that their religion is [uniquely true](#) and distinct from the other "false" religions.

*"Have you ever considered the fact that Christianity is the only religion whose leader is said to have risen from the dead? [1]"*

*"Look throughout the major world religions and you'll find that Buddha, Muhammad, Confucius and Moses all identified themselves as teachers or prophets. None of them ever claimed to be equal to God. Surprisingly, Jesus did. That is what sets Jesus apart from all the others. [2]"*

An extension to this argument is to claim the unique characteristics of a religion are proof of God's existence. All other religions are considered to have the characteristics of human invention. The argument is often stated as follows: [3]

*"God is perfect. Men and women are imperfect. As a result mankind can only create imperfect religions. That means that all man-created religions are imperfect and have common characteristics. This makes the one religion created by God unique, because it has characteristics only God could give it."*

In other cases, the argument is left as subtext:

*"A scholar who pondered about this verse [Surah 4:1 ] states: 'It is believed that there is no text, old or new, that deals with the humanity of the woman from all*

aspects with such amazing brevity, eloquence, depth, and originality as this divine decree.' [\[4\]](#)"

The specific details that are unique are usually doctrinal statements and miracle testimony. The argument is related to the deductive [argument from design](#) because the characteristics of a religion are used to infer a God and all other possible sources are ruled out.

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## Formal Arguement

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1. A religion R makes certain unique claims.
2. A perfect God would create a religion that makes these claims.
3. No other religion makes these claims.
4. There is no other way a religion could make these claims except if it was directed by God.
5. Therefore, religion R is true and all other religions are false.

## Examples

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### Theology

Regarding the [Trinity](#):

*"If you are looking for something super-personal, something more than a person, then it is not a question of choosing between the Christian idea and the other ideas. The Christian idea is the only one on the market."*

## Counter arguments

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### Uniqueness does not automatically imply truth

The argument assumes no other religion could be like one designed by God. This is an unsupported assertion and establishing it would depend on prior knowledge of God, which would make the argument [beg the question](#). It is possible God created a religion that is very similar in character to pre-existing religions.

Also, uniqueness may arise from other processes. Of itself, uniqueness does not imply truth or perfection.

### Many religions claim uniqueness

[Many religions](#) claim different sets of unique characteristics and there is no clear advantage of any particular claims of uniqueness.

### Overstated uniqueness

Some religions claim to be unique on particular grounds, such as [Jesus](#) being [resurrected](#). However, this claim is not actually unique to Christianity. The gods [Dionysus](#), [Odin](#), and several others also are said to have returned from the dead. <sup>[5]</sup> [Virgin births](#), [flood myths](#), claiming to be the [son of god](#), performing [miracles](#), prophets appearing in visions and ascending to [heaven](#) are also common to many religions.

Many supposedly unique features of a religion are often adapted from earlier religions. The themes and mythology of Christianity was based on Jewish, Egyptian and Greek myths. <sup>[6]</sup> Christian theology largely originates from [Aristotle](#) and other Greek philosophers, via [St. Augustine](#). <sup>[7]</sup> The Abrahamic religions were influenced by [Zoroastrianism](#): <sup>[8]</sup>

*"Zoroaster was thus the first to teach the doctrines of an individual judgment, Heaven and Hell, the future resurrection of the body, the general Last Judgment, and life everlasting for the reunited soul and body. These doctrines were to become familiar articles of faith to much of mankind, through borrowings by Judaism, Christianity and Islam; yet it is in Zoroastrianism itself that they have their fullest logical coherence [...]"*



Islam was based on earlier Abrahamic religions as well as Arabic paganism. Prayer five times a day toward Mecca, pilgrimage, the Ṭawāf ritual of circumambulation, lunar symbols and worship at the Kaaba are all pre-Islamic pagan practices. [\[9\]\[10\]](#)

## Uniqueness of holy books

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Some religions claim their holy book, such as the [Qur'an](#), is unique, which is supposedly evidence of its divinity.

*"Muslims have something that offers the clearest proof of all - The Holy Quran. There is no other book like it anywhere on earth. [\[11\]](#)"*

*"And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto"*

— [Surah 2:23](#)

However, the Qur'an is not particularly special in any literary, scientific, political or poetic sense. [\[12\]](#) Also, uniqueness does not necessarily imply divinity.

## References

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1. [↑](#) [\[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) [\[2\]](#)
3. [↑](#) Mission To America, How do we know Christianity is the one true way?, retrieved 3rd Apr 2014 [\[3\]](#)
4. [↑](#) [\[4\]](#)
5. [↑](#) [\[5\]](#)
6. [↑](#) [\[6\]](#)
7. [↑](#) Wikipedia, "Aristotle, Influence on Western Christian theologians" [\[7\]](#)
8. [↑](#) Mary Boyce, Zoroastrians, pg 29
9. [↑](#) Vin Chauhun, The Pagan Roots of Islamic Worship [\[8\]](#)
10. [↑](#) Wikislam, Pagan Origins of Islam [\[9\]](#)
11. [↑](#) [\[10\]](#)
12. [↑](#) [\[11\]](#)

## External Links

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- [The Uniqueness of Christianity](#)
- [Unique Features of Islam](#)
- [The Uniqueness of Judaism](#)

## Argument from design

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The **argument from design**, also known as the **teleological argument**, is an argument for the existence of a [divine designer](#) based on instances of order or purpose in nature. The argument has been used since ancient Greece and remains a popular argument. The [intelligent design](#) movement is based on this argument. The conclusion only states there is a designer but [does not support any particular religion](#).

Arguments [for](#) and [against](#) the validity of the argument have been advanced by many philosophers and apologists. [David Hume](#) was highly critical of the argument in his seminal book [Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion](#). [William Paley](#) introduced the [Watchmaker analogy](#) which is a popular wording of the argument.

A typical argument from design is as follows: <sup>[1]</sup>

*"Some natural systems, especially living systems, contain ingenious solutions for solving technical problems. Human inventors must solve the same physical problems in order to achieve similar results [...] Ingenious biological features were [...] engineered by our wise, benevolent, and powerful Creator. Nature has never been observed inventing these kinds of complex structures, each well-suited to its task, and there is not even a theoretical, realistic step-by-step evolutionary explanation for how they could have developed. Thus, in the same way that we infer a painter from a painting, or an engineer from an engine, we infer a Creator from a creation."*

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## Formal Argument

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There are three formal variants of the argument from design. <sup>[2]</sup> They are used individually or together in informal statements of the argument.

*Deductive version:*

- a1) Objects that are designed by humans are ordered\*.
- a2) The order\* in any object originates from an external source.
- a3) There is no other external source of order\* other than a designer,
- a4) An object X (for instance, an eye or the whole universe) is ordered\*.
- c1) X was designed.
- c2) Therefore a designer of object X exists.

\* or have purpose, complexity, beauty or any other characteristic property of design.

*Analogical (inductive) version:*

- a5) Objects that are designed by humans are ordered\*.
- a6) A certain object X (for instance, an eye or the whole universe) is also ordered\*.
- a7) By analogy human objects are similar to object X, and the causes must be the same.
- c3) X was designed
- c4) Therefore a designer of object X exists.

There is a third form of the argument which does not rule out other explanations for order, but selects design because it is supposedly the most probable explanation. <sup>[2]</sup>

## Criticism

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### Characteristic properties of a designed object

The argument from design depends on a characteristic property that is indicative of design. The characteristic property is either used to assert the similarity of human design to an ordered system or to rule out natural processes forming an ordered system.

#### Vague terminology

The argument from design asserts that human designed objects and natural objects share a property that is characteristic of design. While this characteristic property is usually called "order", "purpose" or "complexity", what these specifically refers to is vague. For instance, [Paley](#) does not specify explicitly state what he means by "the marks of design" in a watch.

### **Analogy with a single universe**

We only have knowledge of our universe. To properly infer the properties of designed universe in general, we need to have experience of multiple universes. If we do not, any specific properties of our universe may have originated from a source other than design. Since we lack knowledge of multiple universes, we cannot infer the similarity between human design and the design of the universe. This is known as the [spotlight fallacy](#).

### **Usefulness and purpose is a human construction**

Ideas of usefulness originate in our minds and are independent of an object's origin. Water is useful for drinking and cleaning but it has existed longer than all life and will probably continue to exist after humans are extinct. Both designed and non-designed objects may be useful in a particular circumstance.

Purpose is also human invention and we should distinguish the *use* of something for a purpose with the *design* for a purpose. We can say a watch's purpose is to tell time. However, they can be utilized as a paper weight, a pendulum, a fashion accessory, etc, in which case the purpose of a watch is changed by our minds. Natural objects are also used for a purpose, such as a cave for shelter but it does not follow that the cave was formed for that purpose.

Many versions of the design argument assume the purpose of a particular object is for the benefit of humans, such as the [Fine-tuning argument](#). Without supporting evidence that an object was designed with this in mind, the claim is arbitrary and anthropocentric.

### **Is there any object that was not designed?**

Creationists generally assert that everything in the universe was designed. It is therefore impossible to establish a distinction between designed and non-designed objects, because there are no non-designed objects for us to experience! Therefore creationism is incompatible with the argument from design.

In the Watchmaker analogy, Paley claims a rock might have always existed but a watch was definitely created. The characteristic property of design implicitly suggested is the watch is not naturally occurring and is therefore designed. However, he also argues the universe, including the rock, was designed. This destroys the "naturally occurring" vs. "not naturally occurring" distinction he first established.

### **Beauty**

Beauty is a subjective human invention and does not reliably indicate the origin of anything. What constitutes beautiful varies from person to person, which prevents general agreement on any particular evidence to support the argument.

### **Patternicity**

Main Article: [Apophenia](#)

Humans tend to see apparently meaningful patterns even when they are not really present. <sup>[3]</sup> This bias makes alleged supposed patterns, such as "order" or "purpose" in the universe, very questionable unless they can be rigorously defined and evaluated.

### **Specified complexity**

There are various definitions of [specified complexity](#). Based on the general concept, [William Dembski](#) adapted the idea into a mathematical system loosely related to information theory. In this context, complexity implies the low probability of an object to occur by random sampling of possibilities. <sup>[4]</sup> Specified generally means "a significant, subjective <sup>[5]</sup> outcome". Specified complexity has been widely criticised for its inconsistent use of terminology, unique jargon, irrelevance and questionable validity <sup>[6]</sup> <sup>[7]</sup>. The concept assumes random sampling of possible configurations but this is of questionable relevance to natural processes which tend to vary progressively. Specified complexity is a subjective measure, which is liable to the [Texas sharpshooter fallacy](#) and anthropocentrism.

### **Irreducible complexity**

[Michael Behe](#) introduced the concept of [irreducible complexity](#). He defines it as the property of being "composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning". <sup>[8]</sup> Some human designs do not meet this criteria, such as redundant systems. The criteria of "cease functioning" assumes there is a purpose to the system, which is a subjective concept liable to anthropocentrism.

### **Does design generally have the alleged characteristic?**

The argument from design claims that intelligence (such as a human mind) can provide an example of how the principle of design actually occurs. However, a designing intelligence on an alien world might operate quite differently. If we arbitrarily use human design as the model for design in general, that is assuming anthropomorphism without any evidence. This is known as the [spotlight fallacy](#). An alien planet may have design manifested without the alleged characteristic design as seen on Earth.

### **Direct experience of a designer**

We know a watch has a designer from experience. Direct knowledge of the watchmaker and the process of watch-making is an certain indication of the origin of order in a watch. However, we do not have direct experience of the design process that planned the universe. Attempting to infer a cosmic designer without having a way to investigate the cosmic design process is unreliable.

## **Ruling out natural processes**

The claim that any specified object cannot naturally occur is hard to establish with any certainty, unless we have direct experience of its design and manufacture. This is required for the deductive version of the argument from design.

### **The system could not have occurred by chance**

Chance is sometimes discounted as the [747 Junkyard argument](#). However, to consider a system could have arisen either through chance or design is a [false dilemma](#). Other processes may have been responsible. Chance or [accidents](#) are rarely, if ever, used as the entire explanation of an ordered system. Equating evolution with chance is a [straw man](#) argument, since it neglects the natural selection component of the theory.

### **The universe is obviously designed**

This considers design as an presupposition. This cannot be used in the design argument without [begging the question](#) (i.e. assuming the conclusion in the assumptions of an argument).

### **Natural processes could not have done it**

Unless evidence is presented why a naturalistic explanation is insufficient, this is an [argument from ignorance](#). It is difficult to imagine what evidence could establish the conclusion that "natural processes could not have done it". If a naturally occurring system is ordered and there is no possible explanation from natural processes, this would be very curious. If there is no explanation for phenomena at this time, it may simply be we are not smart enough to discover it and future discoveries may change the situation. Because of this, science assumes every phenomena is explainable in terms of natural processes (i.e. [materialism](#)). To assert a phenomena is beyond explanation by natural processes *at all* is unscientific by definition. Arguments that are based on unexplainability of phenomena are an [argument from ignorance](#). The conclusion is on a most uncertain footing, which changes with new observations and each new scientific discoveries ([God of the gaps](#)).

### **Order**

Many versions of the design argument use living things as examples that have no explanation. However, [Charles Darwin](#)'s theory of [natural selection](#) showed complexity of life could evolve over long time spans. Like the case of the origin of species, it is likely that many future observations will be inexplicable in an earlier time, only to be explained later.

### **Purpose**

We can only claim an object is designed for a purpose if we have experience of the design process and designer. To say the universe fulfills as purpose assumes that this specific purpose can be known. This is difficult to establish while avoiding gross anthropocentrism

or the assumption of God, which is what the argument intends to establish. How can we say if the universe fulfils an unknown purpose?

The universe appears to operate according to physical laws. These laws are formulated as equations that feature several constant values which have no apparent explanation. These constants include the strength of gravity, the density of the universe, etc. If these were slightly different, the universe would appear to be very different than its current state and would likely contain no life (this is the [Fine-tuning argument](#)). To say this universe has a purpose, such as to support life, without any evidence is to commit the [Texas sharpshooter fallacy](#). From this to claim there is a designer is an [argument from ignorance](#). Some commonly used mathematical values have been cited as evidence of design, such as the golden ratio, but these are subject to the same objections.

It is possible that the physical constants do not vary independently and there is some process that determines what they are, although we are not smart enough to discover it.

### **Beauty**

People disagree about what constitutes beauty. Without having an objective standard, it is difficult to establish which examples support the argument from design. The universe contains a mixture of beauty and ugliness, which makes the conclusion ambiguous.

### **Irreducible complexity**

Irreducible complexity is problematic as a measure of design because some natural structures exhibit irreducible complexity (such as a sea or wind arch). The earth has a solid core, which if "removed" would break the Earth's magnetic field which has the "function" of shielding us. The moon stabilises the spin of the Earth, and if removed, would break the spin axis of the Earth which has the "function" of regulating the seasons. The solar system contains the sun but if this were removed, it would break the solar system's "function" of giving the Earth a stable environment. Based on these examples, irreducible complexity naturally occurs and is an invalid indicator of design.

The idea of a "system" being "broken" is open to interpretation and tends to introduce anthropocentrism. Irreducible complexity ignores the possibility of a system being made useless for its original purpose but made more suitable for an alternative purpose. It is false to assume a biological system has a fixed purpose over its evolution.

Certain structures, such as the flagellar of cells, is supposedly irreducibly complex. <sup>[9]</sup> These examples are explainable by [evolution](#) because it acts by addition, removal, modification and re-purposing. To claim irreducible complexity can never arise from natural processes is to assume all natural processes are additive, which is false.

### **Specified complexity**

William Dembski claims that many biological objects have **specified complexity** and do not occur naturally because of their improbability. The improbability of complexity claimed by Dembski ignores the possibility of gradual accumulation of complexity and he only considers randomly formed systems. Charles Darwin observed that biological changes can incrementally accrue over many generations and invalidates specified complexity as an indicator of design.

### **Multiple sources of order**

The deductive argument claims either natural processes or design is the origin of order. However, this is a **false dilemma**: it is possible that *both* intelligent and natural processes were involved. If intelligence was involved, it may have played a small or negligible role. Perhaps the "designer" had very little choice in the design of the universe, constrained by unknown limitations. In that case, the design choices would not be contingent but rather forced to take the observed parameters.

### **Dissimilarity leads to a weak analogy**

The analogical version of the argument from design depends on the similarity between objects being compared. A strong analogy between two objects that share many properties can result in a relatively reliable conclusion. However, analogies between objects that are drastically different only results in a guess or conjecture with very little certainty. These objections do not apply to the deductive version.

### **Difference in scale**

Human design operates on relatively small objects in a relatively small time using limited materials and skill. The design argument is often applied to *all* life or the *entire universe*, both of which are vast, ancient and mind boggling in scope. Such a creator would require vast resources, knowledge and skill, making it quite unlike a human.

The design analogy compares the entire process of human design to the current and known states of the universe. However, we do not know enough about the early universe to compare the cosmic design process to human designing.

### **Creation from *ex nihilo* nothing**

Humans design based on available resources while situated inside the universe. To create the universe from *ex nihilo* nothing while situated outside the universe and using unknown materials (as **creationists** assert) would likely require a very different designer and a very different design process.

### **Sources of order**

The deductive argument from design asserts that order (or any of the other alleged characteristic properties from design) came a finite set of possible sources. The sources



are then eliminated until only design remains as an explanation. However, it is difficult to comprehensively list all possible sources, leading to a [false dilemma](#), where the actual origin of order is ignored.

### **Chance by random sampling**

Many versions of the argument from design, such as [intelligent design](#), are [false dilemmas](#) between design and chance. In this context, chance means randomly assembled systems. Each attempted random system is independent of previous attempts (a process known as random sampling). However, no natural process is known to work in this fashion. The universe progressively changes with each state is a progression from the previous state. To compare natural processes to pure chance, as in the [747 Junkyard argument](#), is a [straw man](#).

### **Natural processes**

The design argument assumes that systems cannot self-organise. This is arguably false given the examples of [evolution](#), crystal growth, planetary formation, ideas in a human mind (e.g. into a design), thermal convection patterns and in many other naturally occurring examples <sup>[10]</sup>. As mentioned previously, the [747 Junkyard argument](#) is a [straw man](#) objection because it does not realistically consider how natural processes operate.

### **Multiverse**

There may be universes other than our own. The collection of universes is called the multiverse. An designer is not required as an explanation if all possible universes exist. This would explain the alleged "fine tuning" of our universe: we exist in a universe that supports life ([anthropic principle](#)) but there exist other lifeless universes.

Indirect detection of primordial gravitational waves is evidence that the multiverse exists. <sup>[11]</sup> It is possible that the laws of physics in the other universes differ from our own universe. It is also possible that order in the universe was imported from the multiverse by inter-universe interactions.

### **Reproduction, similar to life**

A living thing is a system that often seen to create another ordered system by reproduction. This process is more commonly seen than examples of design. Since order can originate from reproduction, the universe could also be the offspring of a similar universe. A theory of a reproducing universe was proposed by Lee Smolin and called [cosmological natural selection](#) or fecund universes. It speculates each universe produces other offspring universes with similar but not identical physical laws.

Also, we see intelligence arise from reproduction but we never see reproduction arise from human intelligence. Therefore, intelligence less likely than reproduction to be the ultimate source of order.

### **Instinct and non-brain based construction**

Many animals instinctively construct systems such as a spider weaving a web. Therefore, order can also originate from instinct and not only rational thought. Also the web is created using dedicated organs (spinnerets), so a ordered system may originate from an organ other the brain.

### **Intelligence**

An intelligent designer is a popular explanation for order in nature because it is appealing to human vanity, patternicity, over-sensitive **agent detection** and our tendency towards anthropomorphism.

### **Innate self-ordering property**

It is often asserted that God is a self organising system. If it is possible that God is self organising (or necessarily existent), it is also possible that the universe also has this property and therefore does not require an external cause of order. The existence and properties of the universe may have been determined by some unknown physical constraints, implying the "design" of the universe was non-contingent.

### **Eternal order**

The universe may have pre-existed the big bang in some form and order may have always existed. Considering entropy and the second law of thermodynamics, there would have to be an (as yet unknown) mechanism to reset or replenish this from time to time.

### **Chance, given infinite time**

The [747 Junkyard argument](#) claims that it would take an extremely long time for a complex system to form by chance. Our universe may have existed for an infinite time in many different forms and pre-date the apparent beginning of the [big bang](#). A constantly changing system which is limited to finite states would very likely result in an ordered system, perhaps with the order limited to a local area, without any outside intervention. Various models of cosmology are compatible with this conjecture, including an [oscillatory universe](#). However, this theory has become more problematic with the discovery of the accelerating universe which implies no limit for the maximum age of our universe.

### **Chance, if order emerges and self-propogates for infinity**

Given a universe which is ancient (i.e. far older than the big bang suggest but not necessarily infinity old), it is possible for local order to spontaneously arise. This local order

may self-propagate and maintain itself in its environment for an infinite time into the future. This does not require outside intervention. This is similar to the idea of ordered life arising from non-living materials ([abiogenesis](#)), which continues to self-propagate.

### **Oscillatory order and chaos**

The universe may have the innate property of oscillating between order and chaos. It may eventually settle into one of these states or an intermediate state. This may explain the currently observed mixture of order and chaos. Entropy may increase for a time (described by the current model of [thermodynamics](#)) and then decrease (by an unknown process), which would maintain a mixture of order and disorder.

### **Unknown principles**

It is possible that time came into existence at the moment of the [big bang](#). For that reason, it may be meaningless to ask for a causal explanation for order in the universe because it is meaningless to ask when came "before the big bang". However, there may be a non-causal explanation.

We have imperfectly investigated part of the universe in the latter part of its life (after the first fraction of a second after the [big bang](#)). Some processes have been discovered that only operated in earlier times, such as cosmic inflation. What other processes might operate in the early universe that are unknown to us? There is still great uncertainty about the physics of the grand unification epoch, which ended approximately  $10^{-36}$  seconds after the Big Bang. Until we can simulate this environment or observe these phenomena, we cannot discount the possibility order was formed by natural processes in the early universe.

### **What caused the designer?**

Based on the need for a cause of order, the argument from design concludes that a designer exists. This designer requires an explanation as much as the original order.

We may think this question is beyond our comprehension, or irrelevant since we have already established the existence of the designer. However, we may then consider the cause of order in the universe to be beyond our comprehension or not requiring an answer. It is a case of [special pleading](#) to ask for a cause in one case (order in the universe) and to not in the other (the designer).

The designer of the universe may be the product of design of a superior agent, and so on to infinity. This is called an [infinite regress](#) and is generally considered to be so absurd as to [rule out the argument](#) entirely. This possibility is difficult to discount by argument; the argument of an [uncaused cause](#) is similar in this respect. One approach is to assert that the designer does not require a cause or designer (this tactic is also used in the [Kalam](#) argument). Since this "non-caused", necessarily existent property is arbitrarily

granted to the designer and the universe is arbitrarily assumed not to have this property, this argument is a form of [special pleading](#).

To claim the designer does not require a cause because it is necessarily existent is also [begging the question](#). The term necessarily existent only means "to not require a cause".

It is also possible that the designer came from natural processes (such as alien, non-divine designers), or the offspring from a pre-existing deity. We observe intelligence arises from reproduction but never the other way around.

## **Absurd implications of design argument**

If the argument from design is accepted, it suggests conclusions that would be rejected by most theists.

### **Anthropomorphic implications of the argument**

The analogical argument from design asserts the similarity between the ability of humans and God to design. This raises the issue of what other properties are shared between humans and God based on the alleged similarity.

When we experience a human intelligence, it is always accompanied with a human body, as well as other phenomena that co-occur with a mind. We would therefore expect a intelligent designer to have accompanying human attributes. This type of objection applies to all versions of the argument from design.

Given these points, it is likely that God has a physical body. Possibly the body of God is the universe itself, similar to the concept of [Pantheism](#). Also, all designers we have experienced have a gender, a family, different phases of life, an eventual death, therefore God (or the Gods) also has these attributes.

### **Analogical difficulties**

The analogical design argument states that, since the design of order is so complex, the designer must be proportioned to the scale of the work. God therefore exceeds humans in power. However, the analogy brings with it some less flattering implications. The universe and the phenomena are finite, therefore the designer of the universe is finite. An infinite god can never be demonstrated from finite phenomena. [Immanuel Kant](#) criticised all the [physico-theological arguments](#), including the argument from design, saying:

*"The transcendental idea of a necessary and all-sufficient being is so immeasurably great, so high above all that is empirical, which is always conditioned, that we hope in vain to find materials in the sphere of experience sufficiently ample for our conception, and in vain seek the unconditioned among things that are conditioned, while examples, nay, even guidance is denied us by*

*the laws of empirical synthesis. [...] This proof can at most, therefore, demonstrate the existence of an architect of the world, whose efforts are limited by the capabilities of the material with which he works, but not of a creator of the world* <sup>[12]</sup>"

### **Argument from poor design**

If the designer created the entire universe, we may assign praise *and blame* depending on the quality of the work. This is called the [argument from poor design](#). The universe is filled with examples of poor and good design, needless suffering, natural disasters, uninhabitable areas of the Earth and the universe, both good and evil actions, and therefore the designer has either:

- both good and evil attributes (similar to [manichaeism](#) or [polytheism](#)), or
- is finite and somewhat incompetent, or
- is amoral (i.e. without morals)

To assert that God is entirely good and all powerful encounters the [problem of evil](#): why does a supposedly good, powerful God not intervene and prevent evil? Evil exists and we must assign a cause; the argument from design implies God created good and evil.

### **Design as a explanation**

The argument from design does not necessarily support a divine designer or any particular religion. The argument from design has been used by [multiple religions](#) to argue for the existence of God. A confirmation of one monotheistic God would rule out the existent any other God or Gods. Even if we assume the designer is divine, we do not know [which God](#) was responsible for the design.

To explain order the universe that may not have arisen "by chance" by positing an God that is *even more* improbable to occur by chance is absurd (due to God's higher complexity in his infinite knowledge). [Richard Dawkins](#) called God the "[Ultimate 747](#)" in an attempt to subvert the [747 Junkyard argument](#). Some believers counter this by asserting [divine simplicity](#), although that seems incompatible with a knowledgeable God that is capable of design.

### **What is the designer like?**

The explanation of a designer has limited explanatory value. The deductive argument from design establishes no properties of the designer and gives us no insight into the design process. The analogical version weakly suggests the designer is somewhat like a human designer but the extent of that cannot be verified. Without further evidence and many possible types of designer, we cannot confidently assert that the designer is divine.

A designer candidate of life on Earth is non-divine, extraterrestrial aliens. This has been widely discussed and depicted in fiction but there is little evidence to support or rule out this possibility.

The entire universe may be a simulated reality that exists in a vast computer and created by a non-divine entity. This possibility has been considered by physicists [\[13\]](#) and has often been featured in fiction, such as in the novels by Douglas Adams and the sci-fi movie series "The Matrix".

If there is a designer, our universe may have been one of many universes that were designed but there were many botched designs and failed universes before the current design was found. In that case, the designer is not worthy of much admiration. Along similar lines, the universe could be:

- the product of an infant or subordinate God which he then abandoned, being ashamed of it,
- the work of an ancient God who has since died and the universe had continued without further intervention.

For large projects, humans usually attempt to work in teams. Therefore it is likely that a vast project such as the design of the universe would require multiple designers. This is more likely than a single creator, since we have no experience of a single entity that is powerful enough to undertake the entire work. This idea is accepted by many [polytheistic](#) religions.

## Related Arguments

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- [Fine-tuning argument](#) - an argument from design that focuses on physical constants being suitable for life.
- [Why is there something rather than nothing?](#)
- [Intelligent Design](#) - an argument from design that focuses on properties of living things that allegedly cannot occur naturally.
- [Uncaused cause](#) - instead of asking why caused the existence of everything, the design argument asks what caused order in everything.
- [Laminin argument](#) - arguing that evidence exists of a designer's personal signature or hallmark.
- [Argument from scriptural inerrancy](#) - argues that a holy book has the characteristics of a divine author
- [Argument from uniqueness](#) - argues that a religion was designed by a perfect God.

## References

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2. ↑ [2.0 2.1](#) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Teleological Arguments for God's Existence, published Jun 10, 2005; revised Oct 3, 2010.
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5. ↑ William A. Dembski, "No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased Without Intelligence", 2002, p. 66
6. ↑ "Why Intelligent Design Fails: A Scientific Critique of the New Creationism", edited by Matt Young, Taner Edis, 2004
7. ↑ Thomas D. Schneider, Dissecting Dembski's "Complex Specified Information", Updated 2008 Dec 01 [\[2\]](#)
8. ↑ *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, Michael Behe, 1996, quoted in [Irreducible Complexity and Michael Behe](#)(retrieved 8 January 2006)
9. ↑ Scott A. Minnich & Stephen C. Meyer, "Genetic analysis of coordinate flagellar and type III regulatory circuits in pathogenic Bacteria," in Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Design & Nature, Rhodes Greece (2004). [\[3\]](#)
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11. ↑ Lisa Grossman, Multiverse gets real with glimpse of big bang ripples, New Scientist, 18 March 2014 [\[5\]](#)
12. ↑ [Immanuel Kant](#), [Critique of Pure Reason](#) [\[6\]](#)
13. ↑ New York Times, Is the Universe a Simulation?, Feb 14, 2014 [\[7\]](#)

# Banana argument

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The **banana argument** is a variation on the [argument from design](#), saying that some things are the way they are because they were designed especially for our pleasure and comfort.

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## Background information

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This argument was presented by [Ray Comfort](#) as "the atheist's worst nightmare" in the [Way of the Master](#) episode entitled "[The Beauty of a Broken Spirit—Atheism](#)".

## Argument

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### Way of the Master Version



Ray Comfort with a banana

[Ray Comfort](#) on [Way of the Master](#):



*"It's my theory of where the soda can may have come from. Billions of years ago, there was a big bang in space. Nobody knows what caused the big bang, it just happened. And from this bang issued this huge rock, on top of the rock was found a sweet, brown bubbly substance. And over millions of years, aluminum crept up the side, formed itself with a can and a lid and then a tab. And then millions of years later, red paint, blue paint, white paint fell from the sky and formed itself into the words '12 fluid ounces - Do not litter'."*

*"You're saying, 'What are you doing, you're insulting my intellect' - and so I am. Because we know, if the can is made there must be a maker. If it's designed there must be a designer. To believe the soda can happened by chance is to move into an intellectual-free zone... is to have an echo when you think... is to have brain liposuction"*

*"Behold, the atheists' nightmare. Now if you study a well-made banana, you'll find, on the far side, there are 3 ridges. On the close side, two ridges. If you get your hand ready to grip a banana, you'll find on the far side there are three grooves, on the close side, two grooves. The banana and the hand are perfectly made, one for the other. You'll find the maker of the banana, Almighty God, has made it with a non-slip surface. It has outward indicators of inward contents - green, too early - yellow, just right - black, too late. Now if you go to the top of the banana, you'll find, as with the soda can makers have placed a tab at the top, so God has placed a tab at the top. When you pull the tab, the contents don't squirt in your face. You'll find a wrapper which is biodegradable, has perforations. Notice how gracefully it sits over the human hand. Notice it has a point at the top for ease of entry. It's just the right shape for the human mouth. It's chewy, easy to digest and its even curved toward the face to make the whole process so much easier. Seriously, Kirk, the whole of creation testifies to the genius of God's creation."*

## **List Version**

Note that the banana:

1. Is shaped for the human hand
2. Has a non-slip surface
3. Has outward indicators of inward content:

Green - not ripe enough

Yellow - just right for eating

Black - too ripe

4. Has a tab for easy removal of its wrapper
5. Is perforated on the wrapper for easy peeling
6. Has a biodegradable wrapper
7. Is shaped for the human mouth

8. Is pleasing to the taste buds

9. Is curved towards the face to make the eating process easy

The conclusion: obviously the banana was designed by "Almighty God" for the benefit of human beings.

## Syllogism

p1. We know that a soda can is obviously designed

p2. Bananas superficially appear similar to soda cans

c1. The banana is designed

c2. The designer is God

## Counter arguments

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### Straw man fallacy: The soda can

In telling the audience certain design features of a soda can, Comfort creates a [straw man](#) in his description of the [evolutionary](#) process. A soda can lacks the major mechanisms of evolution:

- A soda can does not have a process of self-replication, and thus its traits cannot be inherited by its children (and, by extension, its children cannot have variations of those traits). Development of inheritable traits is *the* process which brings about the change in biological organisms.
- Inheritable traits are positive or negative based on their impact on an organism's ability to survive and propagate successfully. Even if a soda can had inheritable traits and a process of self-replication, the idea that they would form aluminum sides or the words "12 Fluid Ounces - Do Not Litter" is not consistent with [natural selection](#). Those things are matters of human convenience, not things which impact the survival of a species.

Soda cans are indeed designed. And while there may (arguably) be some superficial similarities between soda cans and evolved organisms such as bananas, soda cans lack the mechanisms which would enable evolution. They are thus not analogous to bananas (or other evolved organisms) for the purpose of his argument against evolution.

The current design of soda cans was not the initial design. For example, beverage cans did not always have a tab to open them - they required a "church key" to punch a hole in the top. The first tab-opening cans opened outward, leaving a sharp metal tab for the user to dispose of. Cans haven't always been made of aluminum - earlier versions were steel, which was far heavier to transport, and far harder to machine. The lip and bottom of the can

have been specifically designed to function within automated soda machines. Even designed products have gone through an extensive re-design process akin to biological evolution, with the designer keeping desirable and eliminating undesirable traits.

## Argument from design: The banana

Even if one agrees that bananas have some features which are convenient to humans and other animals, the argument that bananas must have a designer is an [argument from design](#). It **assumes** that natural features which have a superficial resemblance to designed features indicate that the object has been designed.

As the theory of evolution specifically provides an alternative means by which resemblance to design could be achieved naturally, assuming that resemblance to design indicates design makes the argument circular. There is no argument against the theory itself.

## Special pleading: The banana is designed

Whether or not the banana even has design features is arguable:

- Bananas, along with most foods people eat, have been domesticated and bred to have the features we like. We only keep and reproduce banana trees which grow bananas exactly the size and shape that we want, and destroy the rest.

[Natural bananas](#) are much smaller and are full of cherry-pit sized seeds. [Musa balbisiana](#) and [Musa acuminata](#), the ancestors of most cultivated bananas are far less well suited to human needs.

This was possible due to *variation under domestication*. Ironically enough, the title of the very first chapter in [Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species](#) published 150 years ago. Domestication works exactly the same as the natural evolutionary process, except rather than a *natural selection* criteria, the domestication selection criteria is what best suits the animal or plant breeders purposes. He or she controls the hereditary outcomes of genetic lineage by controlling which male and female of the species mate.

Cultivated bananas are [parthenocarpic](#), which means they have been selectively bred to the point where they are sterile and unable to produce viable seeds. This means that they can no longer propagate without human intervention such as [grafting](#).

- Despite their supposed "perfect design", most animals don't eat bananas. Macaques may love the convenience of bananas, but they are probably not so excited about the crocodile's most convenient food source.

- Bananas come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Comfort is careful to say "if you study a **well-made** banana..." Well, yes, if you only pick up rocks that fit perfectly in your hand, you will notice that all the rocks you have fit perfectly in your hand. If you look at bananas in general, they do not fit Comfort's description.
  - Many species of banana are perfectly edible, yet look completely different.
  - Some species of banana look nearly identical, yet are inedible or barely edible.
  - Many species of bananas do not have the ripeness "indicator" Comfort describes.
- Bananas don't grow in most areas of the world. Except through modern supply chain, bananas would not be conveniently obtainable by most people.
- Even if bananas were the perfect food, most plants are not. There's no obvious indication (other than vicarious experience) that blueberries are edible but moonseed are deadly.
- [The Death cap fungus](#) is superficially similar to the [Edible field mushroom](#) as are several species called collectively [Destroying angel](#) and mistakes over these fungi cause new fatalities annually. It is incomprehensible why a god who takes so much trouble over the design of the banana takes so little care to help people distinguish edible mushrooms from deadly poisonous fungi.

And, finally, even if the argument supported the existence of a banana designer, it doesn't show that the designer is supernatural, or that it is Comfort's god. As shown there are natural human designers.

## Other counter arguments

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- Even if the argument showed that bananas were designed by non-humans, it would not prove that there is only one designer; maybe millions of banana designers participated, see [polytheism](#).
- Even if the argument showed that there once was a non-human banana designer, it wouldn't prove that the banana designer still exists.
- The argument provides no good reasons to suppose that a naturalistic, non-design explanation for bananas is improbable, let alone impossible.
- The list of features above smacks of [cherry picking](#) to devise a good example. Given the range of variation in fruits and vegetables, the enormous number of possible combinations of their attributes, and the fact that the foods we eat are almost by definition the ones "most suited" for our consumption, it would be extremely improbable that no fruit or vegetable would seem "especially well-suited" for our use.
- The fact that a banana fits perfectly in our hand might say more about the [evolution](#) of hands than it does about bananas. The human hand is very versatile, able to change

shape enough to hold a tiny pebble or a large tree branch. Lots of things not designed for our enjoyment also fit in our hands.

- The number of objects in the universe that are inedible and even dangerous to humans far outweighs the number of objects that are tasty. Is this evidence of a malevolent designer, or none at all? Were the poisonous berries "designed" to kill us?
- Humans evolved to be able to eat naturally-occurring foods. From this perspective, the argument sounds a bit like [Douglas Adams](#)' analogy of a puddle thinking that the hole it's in was designed to fit it perfectly.
- More animals than humans eat bananas (especially naturally occurring bananas). Perhaps bananas were created for monkeys and humans just knew a good thing when they saw it.
- Humans eat all kinds of food and not all of it is easy to get at. The [coconut](#) is also enjoyed by humans and yet, apart from having a non-slip surface (like almost all natural objects) and tasting good (like most foods humans eat), it holds none of the other properties of the banana. Coconuts are hard to collect because they grow high up, coconuts are far harder to hold or to crack open and contain unhealthy saturated fat. A [cow](#), whose meat some might say is far more delicious than a banana, is fairly difficult to hold in the hand when in its natural form. Like many other foods, cows also require special preparation before eating, otherwise some dangerous diseases can result. The diseases, by the way, come from bacteria that theists would also say were created by God.
- Some humans are allergic to bananas, casting doubt on the premise that bananas or humans are designed one for the other.
- This is not an argument for Christianity. If it were designed, the banana could have been designed by Odin, Zeus or any other deity.
- The "Tab" which is used to peel off the skin is in fact what connects a Banana to the bunch. Indeed, many primates don't even use it to peel off the skin, instead peeling from the bottom up.
- Some people don't *like* bananas. If they were designed for human beings (who were themselves designed, presumably), why don't *all* human beings like them?

## Additional notes

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Ray Comfort in episode #103 of the [Hellbound Allee](#) show, conceded that this is a bad argument due to the human domestication of the banana.

He has since recanted in somewhat of a [notpology](#), that the argument is still valid as it was God who gave us the ability to domesticate said plants and animals, and furthermore that he no longer uses the banana argument solely because atheists have maliciously removed

the argument from its proper context, a segment in which Comfort compares evolution to the [spontaneous natural formation of a Coke can](#) over millions of years.



A wild banana, 'as god created'. The ones we have today are the result of centuries of artificial selection by man.

## Links

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### See also

[Argument from design Ray Comfort](#)

### External links

- [Banana argument video clip](#) – As presented by Ray Comfort on youtube
- [Comfort conceded the banana argument](#) - Hellbound Aleee announcement of Comfort conceding the argument
- [Rays Banana Notpology](#) – Rays retraction of original Hellbound Aleee conceding of argument
- [The banana argument in written form](#) - Presented completely without intentional irony (poe's law)

### Reference

- [Way of the Master s1e07](#) – Comforts Way of the Master series episode *The Beauty of a Broken Spirit—Atheism*

## 747 Junkyard argument



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*Junkyard tornado\*](#)



Aircraft junkyard



For more information, see the [TalkOrigins Archive](#) article:

[\*Tornadoes in junkyards do not build things\*](#)

The **747 Junkyard argument**, also known as the **tornado argument**, is made by [creationists](#) and proponents of [intelligent design](#) and states that attributing the development of [life](#) to natural forces such as [evolution](#) by [natural selection](#) is like expecting a tornado moving through a junkyard to result in a fully functional [Boeing 747](#) aircraft. The argument was originally made by British astronomer [Fred Hoyle](#). This analogy depends on a fundamental misunderstanding of the "[randomness](#)" involved in the development of life, as well as a blurring of the separate issues of how life arose from non-life and how subsequent life developed from earlier living things (the jet is clearly supposed to suggest the complexity of current living organisms).

[ID](#) advocates sometimes present calculations showing the impossibly low [odds](#) of a given [protein](#) spontaneously self-assembling from a batch of [amino acids](#). [William Dembski](#) uses this approach in his paper [\[1\]](#). Such calculations are irrelevant because they ignore important features of proposed evolutionary mechanisms — the very features that get around such seeming impossibilities, in fact.

The argument is a form of [argument from design](#) because a specific trait of a class of objects is said to imply the object was designed.

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# Formal Argument

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1. The components of a system (such as parts of an aircraft or a biological system) have many possible states or arrangements. The vast majority of states are broken or invalid.
2. From (1), the probability of a correct or valid state being randomly selected is very low.
3. There is only a finite time and therefore only a limited number of configurations could actually have been randomly assembled and tested.
4. From (2) and (3), random assembly of the system almost certainly did not occur.
5. From (4), therefore a different explanation for the system's assembly is almost certainly required.
6. The explanation is God.

# Counter-apologetics

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## Characterising evolution as randomness

*Main Article:* [Evolution is not a theory of chance](#)

The tornado argument depends on the common fallacy of equating "natural" explanations of life with "randomness". Only a small part of evolutionary theory is [actually based on randomness](#). [Genetic mutations](#) and natural [genetic variation](#) present in populations are, to a large extent, random; and the kinds of [selective pressures](#) encountered by individuals (predation, food supply fluctuations, etc.) are to some extent random in nature. However, the differential benefit of one characteristic over another in dealing with these environmental pressures (that is, the "fitness" part of "[survival of the fittest](#)") is *not* random. Some adaptations are clearly beneficial to the organism and some are clearly not. This means that [Darwin's](#) proposed driving force behind evolution, [natural selection](#), is anything *but* random.



In addition, evolution doesn't work quickly by way of massive, uncontrolled forces, as tornadoes do. Evolution theory suggests that *small* changes, accumulated over extremely *long* periods of time, result in the current diversity of life.

Most importantly, the tornado analogy lacks the two main elements that make evolution work: *reproduction* (which enables "descent with modification") and *selection* (which enables increasing complexity). The lack of these aspects reinforces the improbability of anything useful coming out of the process.

If rephrased to account for time, natural selection and different outcomes, it should be asked what the odds are of achieving some functional transportation device from a tornado moving through a junkyard of airplane parts for three billion years, where any parts that combine successfully remain while any parts that do not match will not stay together, and assuming that no parts are ever damaged and they are interchangeable.

## **Assuming the goal of evolution is to create humans**

The fact that the argument posits the creation of a working aircraft reveals another misconception: that evolution has *as its goal* the creation of complex living organisms. This is a case of unwarranted anthropocentrism. Evolution has no final goal or purpose; it is merely a consequence of variation among individuals coupled with environmental pressures.

The kind of calculations made by Dembski are based on (or perhaps intentionally rely on) a fundamental misunderstanding of what [probabilities](#) should actually be considered. The odds of a *particular* group of amino acids assembling into a *particular* protein may indeed be small, but the kinds of amino acids and proteins that current life is based on are not the only ones possible. Indeed, even the mixture of *atoms* that life on Earth is primarily based on is not the only possibility (see [Wikipedia:Alternative biochemistry](#)). And at the other extreme, the current range of living things we see around us are not the only possible life forms that *could* have evolved. To claim that a random outcome is significant because it merely occurred is an example of the [Texas sharpshooter fallacy](#).

To illustrate the previous point with another analogy, consider the probability that Dembski's own parents would create a child exactly like Dembski. The odds are astronomical. But, of course, they did. On the other hand, consider the probability that Dembski's parents could create *any* child. Those are much better odds.

## **God as an explanation**

Main Article: [Ultimate 747 gambit](#)

To explain an ordered in a complex system with an even more complex and ordered system only introduces further difficulties to the original problem. If a

complex system is unlikely to naturally occur, God is even more unlikely to naturally occur than an ordered universe. For this reason, Dawkins turned the 747 Junkyard argument upon itself and called God the [Ultimate 747](#).

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

No specific God is proved by the argument.

## Argument from ignorance

It is usually assumed, by [false dichotomy](#) and [argument from ignorance](#), that the only alternative explanation is an intelligent designer.

## See also

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- [God of the gaps](#)

## References

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- ↑ William A. Dembski, *Specification: The Pattern That Signifies Intelligence* [\[1\]](#) (383k PDF)

## Laminin argument

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The **laminin argument** is an attempt to prove the existence of the [Christian god](#). The argument promotes the idea that God left a hallmark of its creation of living beings in the form of the laminin glycoprotein.

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## Background information

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The pastor Louie Giglio promotes this argument in one of his DVD sermons. It has since been passed around in chain letter e-mails and social networking sites.

## Argument

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- p1. Laminin is a protein that bonds living cells together.
- p2. Laminin is shaped like a cross.
- p3. The cross is the symbol of Christianity.
- c1. Laminin's shape is the signature or hallmark of an [intelligent designer](#)
- c2. That designer is the Christian god.

## Counter arguments

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### **Biblical inaccuracy**

The earliest known copies of the gospels use the word *stauros* for Jesus's cross. According to historians of the time, the *stauros* crucifixion was done as a "T" shape. Jesus's cross was not cross-shaped.

### **Association fallacy**

A commonly used *illustrative format* of the structure of laminin can be said to resemble a cross (among other things, such as a sword or caduceus [the latter being a symbol of the Greek god Hermes], or even an *inverted* cross [which is often displayed to *mock* the Christian god]). The actual protein itself would have to be manipulated from the form it takes in nature in order to resemble a cross.

### **Cherry picking**

Laminin is not the only protein or cell found in animal connective tissues. None of the others (nor their structural illustrations) can be said to be shaped like a cross.

As noted above, laminin is only found in animals. Is it being suggested that another entity designed the plants?

### **Graven image**

A common criticism of Christianity is that it breaks the second commandment (of the Biblical [Ten Commandments](#)) by the use of the cross or crucifix as a symbol of worship. If this is an accurate criticism, then the Christian god is encouraging the breaking of its own commandments.

### **False dilemma**

Even if intelligent design was proven, it does not prove the Christian god was involved. Extraterrestrials that use a cross as a symbol are one of the many other possibilities.

## **External links**

- [\[1\]](#) - Snopes article on debunking the laminin argument, includes the structural illustration often used in the argument and photo of laminin as found in nature
- [\[2\]](#) - Youtube clip of Giglio making the laminin argument
- [A lame argument about laminin](#) A good rebuttal
- [Many other molecules have shapes that can be seen or imagined as special for many different religions.](#) Laminin is not unique.

## Reference

- [Wikipedia:Laminin](#) - Wikipedia article on laminin

# Argument from personal experience

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(Redirected from [Personal revelation](#))

The **argument from personal experience**, also known as **personal revelation**, is the sensation of a direct experience of God or the supernatural. This can be a feeling of divine presence or in the form of conversation, vision or creative inspiration. This argument is particularly common among certain branches of Christianity where things like possession and levitating have been reported. Many believers do not have personal revelations and have other foundations for their beliefs.

Personal experiences are subjective and, as such, cannot be directly shared, only anecdotally shared.

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## The argument

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1. I had a personal experience of God
2. God exists

## Example of usage

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*"[Jesus](#) appeared to me in a vision, thus I know the doctrine of [Christianity](#) is true."*

*"Jesus had knocked on the door of my heart and asked me to open up. And I had done so. Jesus lived in my heart and affected every action I took. [...] Sometimes when afraid, loney or distressed, a voice spoke to me, comforting me, guiding me through the labrynth of my own mind. I came to associate this voice with God and he spoke to me often in times of great distress. Like a guardian angel, this voice protected me from my own fears. [...] This voice seemed different from my own internal voice, because it spoke with a ring of authority. And everything it said seemed profound, insightful and important. Whenever I heard a voice like this, I labelled it as God speaking to me. [...] I felt God's tangible presence in church. When we were all together, sometimes a spirit moved through us. I was sure that this was God. [...] These perceptions of a personal relationship with God were my strongest evidence that he existed. To me, my experience of God was every bit as real as the visible world around me, as real as the people I saw, the papers I wrote or the wonders of the universe. For me, this experience was reality. <sup>[1]</sup>"*

*"I saw a [ghost](#) with a friend of mine - I am not a liar, an attention seeker. Neither was I overtired when this happened."*

## Counter-apologetics

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Testimony is not necessarily a reliable source for claims that cannot be independently observed.

### Experience of God as a psychological effect

Both believers and non-believers experience spirituality, beauty and morally uplifted emotions <sup>[2]</sup>. Imaginary friends are a common occurrence normally associated with childhood <sup>[3]</sup> and often are considered to be guardians. God may be a conceptual "hyperreality", in which the consciousness cannot distinguish between an actual God or a representation of God that is interacted with *as if it really is God*. <sup>[1]</sup> Humans have cognitive biases that make us perceive supposedly meaning patterns in random data; this effect is called [apophenia](#). Expectation of certain outcomes makes use selective on the evidence we consider in an effect called [confirmation bias](#). Existent or not, mundane events would then be interpreted as a sign from God.

These phenomena can make believers experience real emotions because the simulation of God occurs subconsciously. If God is simulated by believers but has no reality, then God is a [simulacrum](#).

*"Was the voice of God that I'd heard my whole life simply my own voice? [\[1\]](#)"*

Humans tend to presume the existence of an intelligence agent inappropriately; this effect is called "hyperactive agency detection". This bias may have had an evolutionary origin, as the consequences of failing to spot a predator could be fatal.

*"The high cost of failing to detect agents and the low cost of wrongly detecting them has led researchers to suggest that people possess a Hyperactive Agent Detection Device, a cognitive module that readily ascribes events in the environment to the behavior of agents.[\[4\]](#)"*

Belief in God could be a by-product of all these cognitive biases. The result is that some believers experience a *relationship with God* and sincerely relate their experiences to others.

## Epilepsy

Recently, there has been a great deal of work done on the subject of temporal lobe epilepsy and its relationship to religious visions. Neuroscientist [V.S. Ramachandran](#) has written a great deal on the subject, asserting that the cause of many visions that religious leaders have had over the years may have been caused by neurological function. The pervasiveness of simulated religious experiences during temporal lobe seizures offers sufficient reason to be skeptical of the claim that a vision of Jesus might actually be caused by the presence of Jesus, and not by an incidental error in the wiring of the brain.

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

Another problem with personal revelation is that so many people from other religions experience it too, yet they don't all experience the [Christian](#) god. If personal revelation in the case of Christianity is to be believed then one must also believe the [Muslim](#) when they say they've had personal revelation of [Allah](#).

It is also often noted that individuals in a particular society only ever have visions of the deities and prophets

associated with the societies that they have been exposed to. A person in sub-Saharan Africa who has never been exposed to Hinduism has not had a vision of Krishna or Vishnu, and a person in Saudi Arabia who has never been exposed to Christianity has never had a vision of Jesus. However, this move towards the evidence is somewhat controversial, as apologists may be liable to assert the possibility of exceptions to this rule. Such exceptions are plausible, in the form of figures resembling, for example, the Virgin Mary, but usually rely on vague descriptions of the religious figure in question.

People in the same religion do not experience consistent revelations. We might expect a consistent God to be experienced in a uniform way.

A counter argument to this point is the [all gods are aspects of the same God](#): God is so vast and difficult to comprehend that each person experiences a different aspect of God. If this were the case, overall patterns would merged of a single entity but this has not occurred.

## No extraordinary or consistent knowledge

Main Article: [Argument from prophecy](#)

The revelation never includes information that the recipient could not possibly have known and can be independently verified, such as the time and location at which the next earthquake would occur, or any number of as-yet-unsolved problems in science, or even the meaning of "frontlets" in the [Bible \(Exodus 13:16\)](#) ).

## References

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1. ↑ [1.0](#) [1.1](#) [1.2](#) Chris Redford/Evid3nc3, Deconversion: Personal Relationship, 29 Dec 2009 [\[1\]](#)
2. ↑ Algoe, S., Haidt, J., *Witnessing excellence in action: the 'other-praising' emotions of elevation, gratitude, and admiration*, J Posit Psychol. 2009; 4(2): 105–127 [\[2\]](#)
3. ↑ [\[3\]](#)

4. ↑ Gray, Kurt (Feb 2010) . "[Blaming God for Our Pain: Human Suffering and the Divine Mind](#)". *Personality and Social Psychology Review***14** (1): 9–10. DOI:[10.1177/1088868309350299](#).

Retrieved on Dec 21, 2010.

## Links

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### See also

- [Majority argument](#), this argument is often combined with the argument above.
- [Consciousness](#)
- [Argument from divine sense](#)
- [Sensus divinitatis](#)

### External links

- [Why "I Feel It In My Heart" Is a Terrible Argument for God](#) by [Greta Christina](#)

# Consciousness

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For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Consciousness](#)



For more information, see the [Wiktionary](#) article:

[consciousness](#)

**Consciousness** is a term used in psychology and [philosophy](#) of mind to refer to a number of different phenomena. It can refer to attentiveness or self-awareness, but the sense that has attracted the most interest in recent years is the sense of subjective experience. This sense is sometimes illustrated through such questions as "what is it like to be a bat?"

The most basic debate over consciousness in this sense is whether it can be explained in physical terms, or is in principle inexplicable in physical terms. David Chalmers, a leading advocate of the second view, defends his position primarily by appealing to the possibility of a physical duplicate of a person without any of that person's subjective experiences (the zombie argument) or the possibility of a super-scientist who knows everything about the physical aspects of perception but doesn't know what it's like to have a particular experience (the knowledge argument, or "Mary" argument for the



name commonly given to the hypothetical super-scientist). John Searle has accused proponents of the physical view of consciousness of simply ignoring our conscious experiences. In response, [Daniel Dennett](#) has argued that the anti-physicalist position makes consciousness something utterly mysterious, which our scientific investigations into the brain have inexplicably failed to detect. Against the accusation that he is denying something obvious which we could not be mistaken about, Dennet has said "this is a mysterious doctrine (at least as mysterious as papal infallibility)." In order to make their views comfortable with modern science, many proponents of physically irreducible consciousness endorse a view known as [epiphenomenalism](#), which says that conscious states are caused by the brain but do not themselves cause anything physical. In the view of critics like Dennett, however, this simply contributes to the mysteriousness of the view.

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## Neurological Background Information

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The organ by which we come about perceiving our world and make sense of it is the [brain](#).

The center of [cognition](#) in the human brain is the frontal lobe, which is in addition used for executive function - i.e. pulling together information and deciding what to do with it.

Sensory [perception](#) is located in the parietal and temporal lobes; disorders which afflict this particular area include [temporal lobe epilepsy](#), a noted subject of [neurotheology](#) (for more information, read the works of neurotheologists [Richard Davidson](#) and [Robert Persinger](#)).

The limbic system, especially the hypothalamus and amygdala, pull together and react to this information to send it to the frontal lobes. Swedish neuroscientist Bjorn Merker has in addition postulated that the brain stem produces a rudimentary consciousness which includes perception, integration, decision, and action on external stimuli. This perception and cognition and the action of executive function and the hypothalamus combine to create thought.

## Argument for God

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*Main Article:* [Argument from consciousness](#)

The argument from consciousness is based on the alleged fact that our minds are adapted to understand the universe. It is a form of argument from design. It is also related to the anthropic principle because if the universe were unintelligible, we might not even survive.

## References

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- [Daniel Dennett](#), *Consciousness Explained*
- David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*
- [John Searle](#), *The Mystery of Consciousness*

## External Links

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- [Quining Qualia](#) by Daniel C. Dennett
- [God or Blind Nature? Philosophers Debate the Evidence](#) by Paul Draper

## Emotional pleas

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One of the major underlying and often overlooked reasons for [belief](#) is that it makes people feel good. Regardless of any number of [apologetics](#) arguments a [theist](#) may use, when pressed in an argument their real [reasons](#) for belief will usually come down to a matter of [personal experience](#) and or [revelation](#). One of the main personal experiences given by theists is that a belief in a god makes them feel good. Often this last-stand argument is delivered in an indignant manner, the implication being that as long as it makes them happy, what right do you have to question it? A typical example of an emotional appeal is:

*"If the resurrection of Jesus never happened, Christianity is wrong and we won't have eternal life so our life is meaningless."*

Emotional pleas may also be used to [argue against God's existence](#).

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## Format Argument

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Due to the blatant [logical flaws](#) of this argument, it almost doesn't seem worth writing as a [syllogism](#), but for uniformity's sake.

- p1. Feeling good is better than feeling bad.
- p2. Belief in god makes me feel good.

c1. Ipso facto god is real.

## Counter arguments

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### Non sequitur

The main logical problem with this argument is a [non-sequitur](#) fallacy.

There is no way to get from *it makes me feel good* to *it must be true*.

The specific form of non sequitur is called an [appeal to emotion](#). It is interesting to note, though, that the this appeal is slightly reversed from the typical usage, as the theist is using their own emotions to justify their own beliefs, rather than trying to twist the emotions of the non-believer to change their beliefs.

### Moral implications

Perhaps even greater than the logical fallacy is the [moral](#) implications of this argument.

*Circle of the Seasons c.1953:*

*"It is morally as bad not to care whether a thing is true or not, so long as it makes you feel good, as it is not to care how you got your money as long as you have got it. - Edwin Way Teale"*

An example of this would be that [heroin](#) makes people feel good.

That doesn't mean it *is* good, though. There are many direct side effects and third-party implications with the use of heroin.

Similarly just because belief in a god makes you feel good, doesn't mean that it is good. The real question is, do the benefits of the good feeling out way the side effects?

Direct side effects of this belief could include:

- Unjustified time and monetary commitments.
- A cognitive dissonant lean towards credulously accepting other things that also aren't real.
- Accepting some tenants and dogma of the religion which makes you feel good, such as demonisation of homosexuals, could have the direct inverse action of making other people feel bad.

Some indirect third-party or group implications of the this belief could include

- Degradation of [science education](#). Particularly in the field of biology.
- Unjustified resistance to certain medical advances such as [stem cell research](#).

## Links

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### See also

- [Non sequitur](#)
- [Appeal to emotion](#)
- [Morality](#)
- [Emotional pleas against God's existence](#)
- [Jesus died for your sins](#)

### External links

- [Atheism and the Argument from Comfort](#) by [Greta Christina](#)

### Reference

- [Appeal to emotion](#) – Logical fallacies listed on nizkor.org
- [Wikipedia:Appeal to emotion](#) - Article emotion on wikipedia

## Argument from the efficacy of prayer

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For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*\*Efficacy of prayer\*\*\*](#)



"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

[Prayer](#) is the act of speaking to a [god](#) or [goddess](#), either mentally or out loud, to profess loyalty, express gratitude or ask for favors. If prayers are answered, this is evidence that God exists. A related argument is that one may [come to know God directly through prayer](#). [Skeptics](#) reverse this argument and conclude that [Gods, or certain conceptions of God, do not exist because prayers are not answered](#).

*"To God and to man, the answer to prayer is the all-important part of our praying. The answer to prayer, direct and unmistakable, is the evidence of God's being. It proves that God lives, that there is a God, an intelligent being, who is interested in his creatures, and who listens to them when they approach him in prayer. There is no proof so clear and demonstrative\_ that God exists than prayer and its answer. <sup>[1]</sup>"*

The [New Testament](#) says that prayers are answered:

*"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

— [Mark 11:24](#)

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## Argument

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The argument runs as follows:

- Prayers are observably answered
- Only God could answer prayers
- Therefore God exists

Most objections are focused on the first premise.

## Counter arguments

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## God is supposedly unchanging

[George Carlin](#) suggests the act of prayer seems a little odd for people with belief in a god who is supposed to be [impassible](#), [omniscient](#) and [omnibenevolent](#). Clearly an omniscient god would already be aware of your problems and know what you want. Ultimately, your request may be regarded by God as either [good](#) or [evil](#). If it is good, then why would God not have granted your wishes already? If it is evil, then why would God ever grant your request?

*"Now, you come along, and pray for something. Well suppose the thing you want isn't in God's Divine Plan? What do you want Him to do? Change His plan? Just for you? Doesn't it seem a little arrogant? It's a Divine Plan. What's the use of being God if every run-down schmuck with a two-dollar prayerbook can come along and fuck up Your Plan?"*

— [George Carlin](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

## Contradictory prayers

Billions of people pray for various things every day. Many of the prayer requests are even contradictory. For instance, in a football game, often the players and fans on both sides are praying to win. If God answers prayers, which side should He choose? The side that prays loudest?

## Unclear effect of prayer

Christians often state that God can answer prayers in one of three ways; "yes", "no", or "wait". This makes God no different from random chance. After all, when you pray it can either happen (i.e. God answers "yes"), not happen (God answers "no"), or you have to wait to see if it will happen (God answers "wait"). <sup>[3]</sup> For this reason, [skeptics argue that prayers are not answered](#).

"Successful" prayers rarely have an unambiguous form. Apologists point to events like cancers that go into remission or people waking up from comas as [evidence](#) for the power of prayer. Yet cancer goes into remission and people wake up from comas all the time. How are we to tell the difference between cancer that healed naturally (or thanks to the presence of skilled doctors) and cancer that was cured miraculously? A commonly asked question is, "Why doesn't God heal amputees?" Live footage of a severed limb miraculously regrowing would be far more convincing as proof of the power of prayer. Yet such prayers are apparently never answered, or answered away from the prying eyes of meddlesome investigators.

Some people say that it isn't God's will to perform unambiguous miracles through prayer. However, if it's all just God's will then why pray? God will just do what he wants to whether you pray about it or not.

Scientific studies into efficacy of prayer have not found it to be effective. <sup>[4]</sup>

*"These findings are equivocal and, although some of the results of individual studies suggest a positive effect of intercessory prayer, the majority do not and the evidence does not support a recommendation either in favour or against the use of intercessory prayer. <sup>[5]</sup>"*

*"If you could give some scientific evidence that prayer actually makes an organic difference, not just makes you feel better, that would be something to put on the table. The fact that its not put on the table shows that prayer is pretty much talking to yourself."*

— [Dan Barker](#)<sup>[6]</sup>

*"So I've been praying to Joe [Pesci] for about a year now. And I noticed something. I noticed that all the prayers I used to offer to God, and all the prayers I now offer to Joe Pesci, are being answered at about the same 50% rate. Half the time I get what I want, half the time I don't. Same as God, 50-50. Same as the four-leaf clover and the horseshoe, the wishing well and the rabbit's foot, same as the Mojo Man, same as the Voodoo Lady who tells you your fortune by squeezing the goat's testicles, it's all the same: 50-50. So just pick your superstition, sit back, make a wish, and enjoy yourself."*

— [George Carlin](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

With anecdotal testimony of answered prayers, apologists are effectively [cherry picking](#) successful prayers. They don't tend to have testimony of prayers that God answers with "no".

## God does not heal amputees

Main Article: [Healing of limb amputation](#)

It's not that God ignores some amputees, it's that he ignores all amputees.

Some might say that God does heal amputees by divinely inspiring doctors and scientists to cure them, or through the "miracle" of modern medicine. <sup>[7]</sup> This, however, is easily refuted by [Occam's Razor](#). God's inspiration isn't necessary for doctors and scientists to find ways to cure amputees. And why did God feel the need to bypass this kind of helpful inspiration for thousands of years and reduce the suffering

only in the modern age? There is still no evidence of *miraculous* healing which could be attributed to prayer.

## Improbably events sometimes occur naturally

It's important to remember statistical probability when considering supposed miracles. For example, let's say there's a disease that has no cure and let's say 999,999,999 people so far have contracted it but none have survived. However, let's say the billionth person to contract it *does* survive. This isn't a miracle; it simply means that the odds of survival are now 1 out of 1,000,000,000.

*"There is nothing that is less probable than a miracle [\[8\]](#)"*

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

Many religions claim that prayers are answered. It is unclear which God(s) or which theology is proved by this [broken compass argument](#).

## References

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1. ↑ E.M.Bounds, [The Possibilities of Prayer](#),
2. ↑ [2.0 2.1 \[1\]](#)
3. ↑ [The best optical illusion in the world!](#)
4. ↑ [\[2\]](#)
5. ↑ [\[3\]](#)
6. ↑ [\[4\]](#)
7. ↑ Deacon Jeff, [Comment #4 on Better theological response to "why doesn't God heal amputees?"](#), Sep 14, 2011
8. ↑ Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, [36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction](#), 2011

## External links

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- [Why Won't God Heal Amputees?](#)



- [George Carlin on Religion and Prayer](#) (full version)
- [Proof #44 - Think about a Christian housewife](#) from GodIsImaginary.com: "Take one moment to think about a typical Christian and her "answered prayers.""
- [Prayer on An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural](#) (By [James Randi](#))

## ▪ God created numbers

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- A less sophisticated form of [TAG](#), the **God created numbers** argument simply asserts that certain [logical](#) or mathematical ideas were the creation of a perfect or [omnipotent mind](#), and that their existence is [proof](#) of his existence (since any mind capable of creating numbers in the first place deserves to be called God).

## ▪ Discussion and rebuttal

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### ▪ **Begging the Question**

- Such an argument is [begging the question](#). The main weakness of this [argument](#) is that it's not clear that the numbers need creating. In fact, to suggest that a mind created the numbers and other basic logical and mathematical objects suggests that there could be a state in which they did not exist, and that there is an [intelligent](#) and creative mind capable of functioning before any basic mathematical or logical processes have occurred. Put another way, to say that God created the numbers implies that he had some choice, and could have either not made them or made them differently. What would that even mean, to live in one of these alternative worlds? The idea is completely incoherent.

### ▪ **Descriptive versus Prescriptive**

- One last variation on this counter-argument: do the numbers exist? Clearly numbers are useful for describing certain aspects of the world, and we can talk about their properties in an objective way. They do not exist as concrete, physical entities in the world. We can talk about some [hypothetical](#) person or hypothetical piece of furniture, and we can talk about what it means for that person or furniture to exist; we mean that either there's an object in the world that corresponds to the concept that we have, or there isn't.
- It's not clear what it means for an abstract concept like "[justice](#)" or the number "4" to exist or not exist, and it's not clear that one can meaningfully talk about whether or not such things "exist" in the same way as we discuss whether or not physical objects or physical features of the world exist. And if the very existence of numbers is suspect, their creation is even more so.

- A better way at understanding numbers is that they are basically labels we place on real-life phenomenon. The labels only exist in the same sense that a computer program exists in the memory of a computer. We identify a group of apples, and label the quantity "four", for ease of communicating ideas. There's nothing particularly special about four apples sitting next to each other. It's simply a description we place on reality.

## Argument from the meaning of life



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Meaning of life](#)



For more information, see the [TalkOrigins Archive](#) article:

[If man arose by chance, life would have no purpose or meaning.](#)

The **argument from the meaning of life** states that God must exist because without God, human life would have no objective meaning. Conversely, apologists sometimes assert that a meaning of life exists and that this implies God exists too. No one wants to admit that their life is void of meaning and purpose, which provides the [emotional basis for the argument](#).

In 1843, [Søren Kierkegaard](#) wrote: <sup>[1]</sup>

*"If there were no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the bottom of everything there were only a wild ferment, a power that twisting in dark passions produced everything great or inconsequential; if an unfathomable, insatiable emptiness lay hid beneath everything, what would life be but despair?"*

More recent apologists have written:

*"Without God, life has no purpose, and without purpose, life has no meaning. Without meaning, life has no significance or hope. <sup>[2]</sup>"*

*"If all the events are meaningless, then what can be the ultimate meaning of influencing any of them? Ultimately it makes no difference. <sup>[3]</sup>"*

*"If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless."*

— [C.S. Lewis](#), [Mere Christianity](#)

*"Why would you want to live in a purposeless chaos, in which none of your actions had any significance? In which there was no hope of justice? In which the lives of all those you love ended abruptly at death and had no further significance? Why would you want,*

*desire, actively wish to live in a universe as disgusting as that? You would have to have a very good reason. And I think [atheists] have a very good reason and its what they never wish to discuss. They don't want justice. They do want the dead to be dead. They do want the universe to be purposeless. They do not want their own individual actions to have any other significance than their immediate effect. You have to discuss with them why they are so keen on that proposition."*

— [Peter Hitchens](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

[Argument from justice](#) is sometimes combined with this argument because it provides consequences to moral actions which is argued to be necessary for those actions to be meaningful. <sup>[3]</sup> This argument is related to the [transcendental argument](#) because both assert absolute things exist that depend on the existence of God.

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## What does the "meaning of life" mean?

The meaning of life refers to the significance or purpose of human existence. Ancient and Medieval philosophy in the West has tended to

only consider "intrinsic" values, roughly meaning a value is "good for its own sake", <sup>[6]</sup> as potential candidates for the meaning for life. Similarly, most religions consider metaphysical notions such as ethics or our relationship with God to be the purpose of life. It is usually assumed that the purpose of life is uniform for all humans, invariant to time and is good no matter regardless of who attains it. This is the conception of the "meaning of life" used in the argument.

Enlightenment philosophy changed the focus of meaning to "natural rights" of humans, which do not necessarily depend on God. [Humanism](#) and [utilitarianism](#) are similar in that they are concerned with improving the overall "greater good of humanity". These views implicitly suppose that a significance for human life can exist without recourse to God.

[Existentialism](#) and other branches of modern philosophy have tended to consider absolute meaning of life as non-existent or conceptually meaningless. The possibility of a subjective or person specific "meaning of life" is accepted.

*"This—is now MY way,—where is yours?" Thus did I answer those who asked me "the way." For THE way—it doth not exist! <sup>[6]</sup>*

We know what it means for a human action to have purpose because we experience it every day. However, it is unclear if the concept of "purpose" can be properly applied to an entire life. <sup>[7]</sup>

## Problems With This Argument

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### Appeal to emotion

The argument suggests that we should believe in a god, even if it does not exist, so that we can feel the self esteem boost of our lives having a higher meaning. If a conclusion is [accepted solely on its emotional appeal](#) or [wishful thinking](#), it is a logical fallacy. A person can still have a subjectively meaningful, fulfilling and memorable life, even if absolute meaning does not exist. [Existentialism](#) is a branch of philosophy concerned with existence without absolute meaning, or the need to create one's own meaning. Conversely, some have argued that human mortality followed by non-existence is the only way for human life to have meaning. The rareness and uniqueness is thought to make it special.

*"It's important not to confuse the notion of "pointless" in Premise 2 with notions like "not worth living" or "expendable." [...] But we can very well maintain that each human life is precious—is worth living, is not expendable—without maintaining that each human life has a purpose in the overall scheme of things. [\[7\]](#)"*

*"[Being] aware of our own mortality makes us aware of the value of life. We realise that life is too precious to be wasted and so feel invigorated. [...] We feel grateful just to be alive, to have been born into this world for a short time. We appreciate the beauty and wonder of nature, the people in our lives, and mundane everyday things, such as food, water and the weather. [...] Encounters with death also make us more present-centred. [\[8\]](#)"*

## **Absolute meaning of life might not exist**

The argument assumes there is an absolute meaning to life. However, this is not necessarily true and difficult to establish with any certainty. Although we might feel uncomfortable admitting that our life does not serve an eternal purpose, we should not simply assume that it does have a purpose. There is no evidence that any absolute meaning of life exists. While religious believers claim their idea of the meaning of life is absolute, without some way of verifying it, it is likely to be another a subjective concept. Simply claiming their concept of meaning is absolute does not make it absolute.

## **Free will and predestination**

Main Article: [Free Will vs. Predestination](#)

If meaning is predestined, then either God is unjust and does not give atheists the same facility to meaning, or is impotent, and can't. Secondly, free will and "designed" meaning cannot exist together, as they are mutually exclusive.

## **Christian idea for the meaning of life is questionable**

It is important to determine what the theist believes the meaning of life actually is. In some cases, they say the meaning of life is to worship God. Subservient worship is not going to be most people's idea of a meaningful life.

Alternatively, God may have determined the purpose of humans is to be quite different from what humans

currently belief and, for all we know, is possibly unachievable. This would hardly be a comforting concept.

## God and the absolute

If God exists, what makes that God's view of the purpose of human life more privileged than any other conception? Creating something does not automatically confer the creator's interpretation on the object, as seen with human creations. An object created for one purpose may be equally (or more) suitable for alternative purposes. God may set some criteria for what he considers to be valuable but that does not automatically imply those values have absolute value in themselves.

## Spontaneous meaning

Various possibilities are ignored by the argument but are just as valid as the conclusion. The absolute meaning of life could have spontaneously created itself, be necessarily existent or created by a non-divine agent. It could be different for each person, even if there is a God.

## Claim that Earthly life is worthless

According to [Pascal's wager](#), the value of the Earthly component of life is zero. The Bible also teaches to avoid worldliness <sup>[9]</sup> e.g. [1 John 2:15-17](#) :

*"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."*

[Friedrich Nietzsche](#) strongly criticised this view, claiming that absolute values do not exist but the creation of subjective values is a kind of meta-meaning of life: <sup>[10]</sup>

*"To blaspheme the earth is now the dreadfulest sin, and to rate the heart of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth!"*

If we only have Earthly life and non-believers consider there to be a subjective meaning to life, it is arguable that it is Christians who devalue Earthly life are the real [nihilists](#).

## **No reliable means to determine absolute meaning**

If God created an absolute meaning of life, we do not have reliable means to determine if it exists or what it entails. Holy books and testimony of revelation are contradictory, mythological and vague.

## **Begging the question**

The argument is based on the premise that human life has purpose. Since a purpose automatically implies an entity that determines that purpose, it effectively [assumes its conclusion in a premise](#). <sup>[7]</sup>

## **Variant: argument from the intolerability of insignificance**

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A variant of the argument runs: <sup>[7]</sup>

1. It is intolerable to be insignificant.
2. Only God can provide significance (because he is eternal).
3. God exists.

Like the argument above, is an [appeal to emotion](#), [argument from ignorance](#), etc.

## **Variant: everyone has the need to find meaning**

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Apologists argue that everyone has a compulsion to seek for meaning. A similar claim is that everyone has a "God-shaped hole" in their hearts, figuratively speaking.

"There is a godshaped vacuum  
in the heart of every man, and  
only God can fill it."

— [Blaise Pascal](#)

The cause of this inclination is said to be either natural processes or God. Fulfilling this need is claimed to have [psychological benefits, including happiness](#).

## References

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2. ↑ [Rick Warren](#), *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?*
3. ↑ [3.0](#) [3.1](#) [William Lane Craig](#), *The Absurdity of Life without God* [\[1\]](#)
4. ↑ [\[2\]](#)
5. ↑ [JW Gray](#), *What Does "Meaning of Life" Mean?* December 29, 2009 [\[3\]](#)
6. ↑ [Friedrich Nietzsche](#), *Thus Spake Zarathustra* [\[4\]](#)
7. ↑ [7.0](#) [7.1](#) [7.2](#) [7.3](#) [Rebecca Newberger Goldstein](#), [36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction](#), 2011
8. ↑ [Steve Taylor](#), *Out of the Darkness*, November 26, 2011 [\[5\]](#)
9. ↑ [OpenBible](#), *42 Bible Verses about Worldly Things* [\[6\]](#)



10. [↑](#) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus*

*Spake Zarathustra* [\[7\]](#)

## See also

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- [Existentialism](#)
- [There are no atheists in foxholes](#) - also deals with the emotional impact of one's own mortality.
- [Moral nihilism](#)
- [God is dead](#)

## External links

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- [If there is no God...](#) - The Atheist Experience #654

## Argument from scriptural inerrancy

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The argument from *scriptural inerrancy* states that a holy book is free from errors and therefore had a divine origin. The argument is often stated in a way similar to [Surah 4:82](#) ,

*"Do they not then consider the Qur'an carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradictions."*

The argument is related to the deductive [argument from design](#) because every other source of inerrancy, apart from God, is rule out.

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## Formal argument

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1. A particular holy book is inerrant.
2. Humans could not have been entirely responsible for writing because that would introduce error.
3. From (2), There is no other way of achieving in errancy apart from a divine source.
4. From (1) and (3), the writing was coordinated divine source.
5. From (4), God exists.

## Specific holy books

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### Qur'an

Mainstream [Islam](#) considers the Qur'an to be inspired by God and free from corruption, distortion or any change. <sup>[1]</sup> As stated in [Surah 4:82](#) , this implies a divine origin.

### Christianity

While [some Christians](#) believe that the Bible is inerrant, Christian apologetics tends to focus on the Bible's internal evidence to establish the existence of God, rather than considering the overall characteristics of the book as proof enough. While acknowledging the many authors of the Bible, Mike Culpepper argued that the Bible contains inter-author consistencies that are "most assuredly beyond the writing abilities of any human". <sup>[2]</sup> His aim is to establish the Bible is the word of God "not necessarily based on *what* it says [...] but *how* it was put together". <sup>[3]</sup>

Another example of argument of inerrancy to authenticate the Bible: <sup>[4]</sup>

#### *XX. BECAUSE OF ITS INTEGRITY*

*No internal contradictions, nor external contradictions, exist in the Bible. Of course, there are some "apparent contradictions," but those are left by God to confuse skeptics destitute of faith and confirm the faith of those willing to study with a believing heart.*

Typically, once the Bible is established as true, the argument move on to consider the existence of God based on the Bible's internal evidence.

## Counter arguments

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### Inaccurate scientific and historical statements

Holy books include numerous contradictions and absurdities. This includes the [Bible](#) and the [Qur'an](#). <sup>[5]</sup>

## Different versions exist

Multiple versions of each holy book exist. They can't all be right but they can all be wrong.

Different variants of the [Qur'an](#) exist, quotations from ancient sources are in disagreement and it was written down decades after the death of Muhammad. <sup>[6]</sup> <sup>[7]</sup>

## Circular claims

The claim of inerrancy is often supported by the holy book itself, <sup>[8]</sup> which is a [circular argument](#).

In the case of the [Qur'an](#), it is said to be flawless classical Arabic. However, classic Arabic is defined as that which is found in the Qur'an, making the argument [circular](#). <sup>[9]</sup>

## Fallible humans

If humans are incapable of writing an inerrant book, they are also incapable of evaluating if a book is inerrant.

## References

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1. <sup>↑</sup> Understanding the Qurán - Page xii, Ahmad Hussein Sakr - 2000
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3. <sup>↑</sup> Mike Culpepper, Filty Framed Together: The Bible", WestBowPress 2013, p.2
4. <sup>↑</sup> Greenville Church, "Why I Believe the Bible", retrieved 4th Apr 2014 <sup>[2]</sup>
5. <sup>↑</sup> Contradictions in the Quran <sup>[3]</sup>
6. <sup>↑</sup> Harold C. Felder, [The Qur'an: Heavenly or Human?](#)
7. <sup>↑</sup> [History of the Quran](#), Wikipedia
8. <sup>↑</sup> Rose Ave. Church of Christ, "The Bible is complete and perfect", retrieved 4th Apr 2014 <sup>[4]</sup>
9. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>[5]</sup>

## See also

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- [Biblical literalism](#)
- [Argument from scripture code](#)

# Scientific foreknowledge in sacred texts

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(Redirected from [Scriptural scientific foreknowledge](#))



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*\*Scientific foreknowledge in sacred texts\*\*\*](#)

The argument from **scientific foreknowledge in sacred texts** attempts to prove the existence of God from advanced scientific knowledge in holy books that were written before the information was discovered independently by humans. The information was either imparted by [God](#) to the authors of the holy book or passed down over generations from [Adam and Eve](#) to the authors. <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Formal Argument

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- A holy book contains certain correct knowledge.
- The knowledge could not have been guessed or discovered by humans.
- There God may have been the source of that knowledge.
- There is no other known source for the knowledge.
- From (1), (3) and (4), the knowledge must have come from God.
- From (5), God exists.

## Specific Instances of Scientific Knowledge

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While there are too many claims to comprehensively list here, some of the more interesting and significant examples are cited.

## The Bible



For more information, see the [TalkOrigins Archive](#) article:

[\*\*The Bible's accuracy on other scientific points shows overall accuracy\*\*](#)

- Use of running water for hygiene. <sup>[1][2]</sup>
- Existence of dinosaurs. <sup>[1]</sup>
- [The Earth is spherical](#). <sup>[1][2]</sup>
- The universe has a finite age <sup>[1]</sup>
- Mass extinctions caused by asteroids <sup>[1]</sup>
- The Earth is in a vacuum. <sup>[2]</sup>
- Matter is made of particles <sup>[2]</sup>
- Ship building dimensions for stability <sup>[2]</sup>
- Existence of ocean currents and under sea water springs and mountains. <sup>[2]</sup>

## The Qur'an

*Main Article:* [Scientific foreknowledge in the Qur'an](#)

- The big bang. <sup>[3]</sup>
- The expansion of the universe <sup>[3]</sup>
- Pulsars <sup>[4]</sup>
- Finger print identification <sup>[4]</sup>
- Coronary by-pass surgery <sup>[4]</sup>

## Vedas

- The birth of the universe <sup>[5]</sup>
- Gravitation <sup>[5]</sup>
- The velocity of light <sup>[5]</sup>

## Criticism

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### Argument from Ignorance

We do not have any direct evidence of the source of this alleged knowledge might be. To claim it is God is an [argument from ignorance](#). It might as well have been a lost civilisation or aliens, for all we know.

### Errors in some claims

While the [Bible](#) and [Qur'an](#) make many claims, some of them can be verified as false. This indicates fallibility for one or more of the sources of the books. If the source of the knowledge

was a perfect God, we would expect *all* the knowledge to be correct, which is not the case. The correct claims are emphasised by [cherry picking](#). The most glaring example is that a literal interpretation of the Bible supports [scientific creationism](#), however that theory is considered to be incorrect by mainstream science.

## Common Knowledge

Holy books are usually the record of a tribe's customs and knowledge. The parts that are correct were probably common knowledge at the time of writing and required no external inspiration. It is difficult to rule out the possibility of a culture had a piece scientific knowledge because a written record of an incorrect theory does not preclude a different section of the population holding the correct view.

## Stretching scriptural meaning to fit expectations

Many of the examples are poetic metaphors that require significant post-hoc interpretation to make them fit current scientific understanding. This is an example of [confirmation bias](#). For example, <sup>[2]</sup>

*"Air has weight (Job 28:25). It was once thought that air was weightless. Yet 4,000 years ago Job declared that God established "a weight for the wind." In recent years, meteorologists have calculated that the average thunderstorm holds thousands of tons of rain. To carry this load, air must have mass."*

The force exerted by the wind is a separate from air pressure caused by the weight of air. The weight of air does not depend on if it is moving (as with wind) or not. If it mentioned lower air pressure at high altitude, it might be more credible.

Both young earth and old earth creationists claim the Bible supports their position but both views cannot be true. The Bible can selectively be interpreted to support many alternative views and has very few specifics. An entire section dedicated to a single theory would be a solid foundation. A fleeting reference which requires selective interpretation is unreliable.

Science has many unanswered questions. If there is additional knowledge in sacred texts, it is difficult to use sacred texts to form hypothesis for testing because of their vague wording. If they cannot provide testable hypotheses before discovery by other means, they are technically proto-scientific (at best) and not scientific.

## Distinguishing guesses from justified knowledge

We need a way to distinguish between lucky guesses and justified knowledge in sacred texts. Without this, we cannot assume a claim of knowledge was not a lucky guess. [Democritus](#) (460 BC-370 BC) thought that everything was made of particles. While this hypothesis is true, he had no way of verifying it and it was, to some extent, a lucky guess.

## Multiple religions claim foreknowledge

Multiple religions make claims of scientific foreknowledge and their claims are mutually exclusive. Therefore claims of foreknowledge are an unreliable test. We cannot tell [which God](#) is valid with an unreliable test.

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5. ↑ [5.0](#) [5.1](#) [5.2](#) Padmakar Vishnu Vartak, *Scientific Knowledge in Vedas*, 1995 [\[5\]](#)

## See Also

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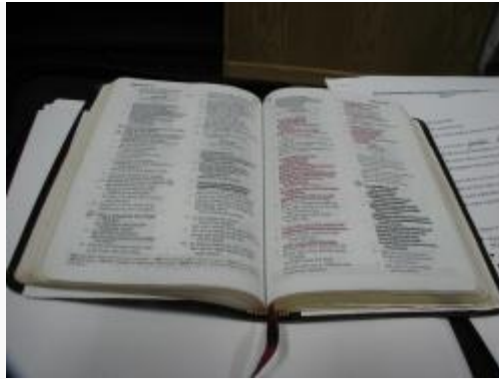
- [Biblical knowledge of round earth before science](#)
- [Biblical literalism](#)
- [Biblical inerrancy](#)
- [Argument from prophecy](#)
- [Biblical contradictions](#)

## External Links

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- [Bible scientific foreknowledge](#), Creationwiki
- [Biblical scientific foreknowledge](#), Rationalwiki

# Argument from scriptural codes



The Bible with annotations by the reader.

Holy books are claimed to have numerical patterns that indicate its divine origin. These include Bible code, the Qur'an and the Torah code which supposedly contain hidden messages and special numbers hidden in the text. Skeptics question if these patterns are just chance occurrences, rather than meaningful messages. Mainstream mathematicians and statisticians reject the concept of Biblical codes.

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## Argument

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### Equidistant Letter Sequences in the Torah and Qur'an

A popular method in this field is to look for hidden words by considering the text as a long string of characters and taking characters at equal spacing. This is called an equidistant letter sequence (ELS). By searching for known names and dates, biographic details of several rabbis was supposedly found in the Hebrew Torah and published in the journal *Statistical Science* as a "challenging puzzle" in 1994. <sup>[1]</sup> The specific patterns were found using computers to sift the text for specific words and variants that were previously defined by the experimenters. The researchers compared their technique to a Hebrew translation of *War and Peace* and allegedly did not find similar patterns. Many words and sentences can be found using this technique and it is not a reliable method of foretelling the future. The original 1994 paper was heavily criticised by later researchers who consider the paper to be a hoax <sup>[2]</sup> but this has been denied by the original authors.

The ELS method has also been applied to the Qur'an with questionable results. <sup>[3]</sup>

### Numerical patterns in the Qur'an

There are many claims for patterns in the Qur'an based on the frequency of specific word occurrences, lengths of phrases and patterns of characters. <sup>[4]</sup> One of the most popular miracle claims originated in 1968 and referred to as the "miracle of 19". It claimed the Qur'an was structured around 19 or its multiples. <sup>[5]</sup> This discovery was announced by Rashad Khalifa, an Egyptian biochemist and gave rise to the **Submitter** religious sect. He was proclaimed a heretic and murdered in 1990. Many patterns were claimed but were generally similar to the following:

- The first verse of the Qur'an has 19 letters,
- Quran consists of 114 suras, a multiple of 19, etc

Proponents of the argument claim: <sup>[6]</sup>

*"Every element of the Quran is mathematically composed, from the frequency of letters and words, unique spellings, number of words from the same root etc.; consistently conforming to a common dominator—the number 19. This superhuman mathematical coding of the Quran, far beyond human ability to create or duplicate, incontrovertibly establishes its Divine authorship."*

Khalifa's method was criticised for modifying the source text to fit his hypothesis. <sup>[7]</sup> Mainstream Islam rejects many of these numerical miracle claims. <sup>[8]</sup>

### Numerical patterns in the Bible

*"A sevenfold mathematical pattern pervades Scripture showing clearly that it is indeed the product of "supernatural engineering" rather than mere human*

*thought. It is something so complicated, no human composer could have achieved it and is a clear sign of God's Hand.* <sup>[9]</sup>"

## Gematria and Theomatics

Gematria is scriptural code based on assigning a number to each word or phrase in the text. It is used to find mystical patterns and occurs in ancient and [Kabbalah](#) numerology.

Theomatics is a variant of gematria that uses biblical text based on assigning a number to each letter of the alphabet. The theory was proposed by [Del Washburn](#) in 1976. The "gematria value" of a word is the sum of each character's numerical value. <sup>[10]</sup> Theomatics claims that words that have similar theological meaning have numerical connections, such as word's gematria being a multiple of a different but related word's gematria. The other pattern of interest is "clustering", which recognises a connection if a word's gematria is "approximately" a multiple of another gematria. For instance, John 3:19, and variants are allegedly a cluster around the number 150 (they are all multiples of 150 plus or minus up to 2). <sup>[11]</sup>

Gematria and theomatics has been criticised for being an unfalsifiable <sup>[10]</sup> pseudo-science and based on nothing more than coincidental occurrences. <sup>[12]</sup>

## Chinese Characters

Main Article: [Chinese characters and the Bible](#)

Chinese writing is based on a series of characters with a distant pictographic origin. Some characters comprise of multiple distinct words while are considered as a word group. While not strictly a Bible code, the word groups have been alleged connected to Biblical concepts and justifies their Biblical in origin. <sup>[13]</sup>

*"The discovery of the Biblical roots of the Chinese pictorial characters points to a common bond between Chinese and Jewish people. This could well be explained by the accounts of the creation, the flood and the tower of Babel outlined in the first 11 chapters of Genesis."*

## Counter arguments

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### Coincidences and meaningful patterns

Patterns in scripture are usually found by trial and error. Using a computer, many different patterns are compared to a pattern specified by the researcher. Because a vast number of combinations are searched, we would expect some apparently interesting patterns to be

found by coincidence. Because the the text can be quickly searched and millions of different patterns are compared, the multiple comparison problem must be considered. This enables meaningful patterns to be distinguished from random patterns requires. These statistical techniques are required to come to any reliable conclusion but are usually missing in apologist analyses. If this analysis is omitted or incorrect, it is all too easy to commit the [Texas sharpshooter fallacy](#) by claiming random patterns are meaningful.

Another approach is to show that patterns occur in scripture but not in secular texts. This is acceptable as long as the analysis is performed rigorously.

## **Cognitive biases**

Humans have a tendency to [perceive patterns in random data](#). It is easy to find patterns in a large corpus of text <sup>[10]</sup> and given a prior belief that there is a hidden code, people adopt superstitious beliefs like numerology, gematria and theomatics.

## **Uncorrupted scripture?**

The analysis is only meaningful if original documents are used and in their original languages. Many religious texts have murky origins. The Bible has a complex history with many alternative versions of books, including the dead sea scrolls. An analysis of patterns is meaningless without a generally uncorrupted edition.

## **Text modified to fit hypothesis**

Allegedly false verses were excluded from the Qur'an in order to fit the hypothesis of the miracle of 19 <sup>[14]</sup>. Excluding evidence that does not fit the expected conclusion is [confirmation bias](#).

## **Secular texts also have the same patterns**

Despite the claims of the arguments proponents, similar patterns of words and letters also occur in secular books. In a parody of the ELS technique, Brendan McKay used the novel *Moby Dick* as a text source and found many interesting patterns. <sup>[15]</sup>

## **Word and letter coding seems arbitrary**

The system to convert characters and words seems to be arbitrarily selected. Without some basis for the choice of numbering system, we would not even expect any significant patterns to be found.

## Secretive God

There is no clear reason why God would bother encoding patterns in scripture when he supposedly has much more effective and straightforward means of communication at his disposal.

## Many possible conclusions

Perhaps the codes were written by humans.

[No specific God or Gods](#) are implied by scriptural codes.

## Refutation and rejection by experts

Patterns in scripture have been shown to be coincidental by statisticians. [\[16\]](#) [\[15\]](#) [\[17\]](#) There is a petition of mathematicians and statisticians that reject Biblical codes. At the time of writing, the petition has 55 names. They stated: [\[18\]](#)

*"There is a common belief in the general community to the effect that many mathematicians, statisticians, and other scientists consider the claims to be credible. This belief is incorrect. On the contrary, the almost unanimous opinion of those in the scientific world who have studied the question is that the theory is without foundation. The signatories to this letter have themselves examined the evidence and found it entirely unconvincing."*

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18. [↑](#) [\[15\]](#)

## See also

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- [Texas sharpshooter fallacy](#)
- [Apophenia](#)
- [Argument from scriptural inerrancy](#)

# Christological argument



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Christological argument](#)



There is little agreement as to what Jesus looked like.

A **Christological argument** is one which makes the case that [Christianity](#) is the "[one true religion](#)" based on the [Biblical record](#) of [Jesus](#) and particularly his supposed [resurrection](#). Because the Bible is the primary (or only) source used to support the argument, it is a form of [argument from scripture](#).

*"[T]he Apostle Paul used Jesus' resurrection as proof of the Christian message. In Acts 17, Paul says that God 'has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising [Jesus] from the dead.'<sup>[1]</sup>"*

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## Background Information

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While some of these arguments attempt to build an [empirical](#) case to demonstrate the accuracy of the Bible's account of the life of Jesus (for example [Josh McDowell](#)'s book [Evidence That Demands a Verdict](#), or [Lee Strobel](#)'s book [The Case for Christ](#)), other arguments simply assume the [historicity of Jesus](#) and the accuracy of the Bible, and build an argument based on the words and actions attributed to Jesus.

## Argument

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### Syllogism

1. If it can be shown that the bible is correct then Jesus Christ must be god
2. There is evidence that the bible is correct.
3. Jesus Christ is god

A common variant of the argument is based on the [resurrection](#) of Jesus.

1. If Jesus was resurrected, he was God.
2. Jesus was resurrected, according to the Bible.
3. Therefore, Jesus was God.

Other variants include:

1. Jesus Christ [fulfils certain old testament and personal prophecies](#)
2. Jesus Christ is too wise to be a mere human
3. Jesus Christ tells us he is the son of God
4. Jesus Christ [performs various miracles](#)

## Counter arguments

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### The Bible is not a reliable source

*Main Article:* [The Bible is not a reliable historical source](#)

Many of these Christological arguments assume in their premises, that the holy book of the religion they actually seek to prove, is a priori completely true. Until it is actually established that the bible is [historically accurate](#) and consistently reliable, there is no reason to accept arguments based on what the bible says. Contrary to popular belief, the Bible was probably [not written by eye witnesses](#). Even if *some* aspects of the bible can be

proved as historically accurate, that does not necessarily make the claims about Jesus or claims attributed to Jesus true. For instance, we have a large body of empirical evidence that George Washington was a real person, but that doesn't mean the story about him cutting down a cherry tree is necessarily true.

Many aspects of Jesus' resurrection such as the end of [Mark](#) are known forgeries added later. Once again the evidence in this line of argument is [lacking to non existence](#). The best empirical evidence is a supposedly empty tomb that we don't even know the location of. Even if we found *thesupposedly empty tomb*, all this would really be evidence of is that there is an *empty tomb*. Any number of other explanations ranging from grave robbers to Jesus not really being dead is almost infinitely more probable than his resurrection. Also, the writers of the Bible cannot [simply be assumed to be trustworthy](#).

## Resurrection does not imply divinity

A person might be resurrected by some unknown forces and not because they were God. Simply assuming they are God is an [argument from ignorance](#). All possible alternatives need to be ruled out before settling on one explanation.

Other Biblical characters were resurrected e.g. [Luke 8:49-56](#) but they are not considered to be God. Some apologists respond:

*"Jesus also predicted that he would rise from the dead as proof of his claims, and his prediction came true. [\[1\]](#)"*

This is moving the goal posts by advancing a completely different [argument from prophecy](#). This counter argument effectively abandons the original argument.

Another line of reasoning depends on God authenticating Jesus by raising him from the dead:

*"So the question for us is: 'Would God raise a heretic from the dead?' I think Muslims and Christians would agree that he would not. Thus, if Jesus' claims weren't heresy, what were they? They must have been true."*

However, this is [begging the question](#) that God exists and has a nature as described in the Bible.

## Jesus was not divinely wise

Jesus was not particularly wise. The majority of Christians maintain Jesus' most spectacular display of wisdom was the [sermon on the mount](#), which contained advice ranging from average to awful. Arguably, the *only* outstanding piece of advice given by Jesus was the [golden rule](#), which was derivative or plagiarized from the earlier sources. There is nothing about his advice that could be considered divine wisdom.



[Richard Carrier](#) has argued that the Roman Stoic philosopher [Musonius Rufus](#) (born 20 AD–30 AD, died as late as 101 AD) was a better moral teacher than Jesus. <sup>[2]</sup> Among other things, Carrier cites Rufus' belief in equality for slaves and his belief that "freedom of speech means not suppressing whatever one chances to think."

## Claims of divinity is not evidence of divinity

Many cult leaders have argued they were divine. That does not make it true and it is a [non sequitur](#) to conclude that they are. Since these claims are often mutually incompatible, it is a [broken compass argument](#). Even if the Bible accurately reports Jesus making the claim, it does not establish that Jesus was not deluded or not one deity among many.

## Links

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### See Also

- [Liar, Lunatic or Lord](#)
- [Sermon on the mount](#)
- [Overview of early Christianity](#)
- [The Bible was written by eyewitnesses](#)

### External Links

- [Case For Christ: The Rest of the Story](#) – Review of Lee Strobel's Christological book on infidels.org by Jeffery J. Lowder
- [Why I Don't Buy the Resurrection Story](#).
- [Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story](#)
- [The Attempts of William Lane Craig to Exhume Jesus](#)

### References

1. <sup>↑</sup> [1.0 1.1 \[1\]](#)
2. <sup>↑</sup> [\[2\]](#)

# Cosmological argument



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*Cosmological argument\*\*](#)

The **cosmological argument** is an argument for God based on the principle that everything has a cause. The argument is also known as the **first cause argument**, **uncaused cause argument**, **argument from existence** and the **causal argument**. One of the most influential statements of the argument was by [Thomas Aquinas](#):

*"Nothing is caused by itself. Every effect has a prior cause. This leads to a [regress](#). This has to be terminated by a first cause, which we call [God](#)."*

There are some popular variants of the cosmological argument, including:

- [Kalam](#), which argues that things that do not come into existence do not require a cause, and
- [Why is there something rather than nothing?](#), which argues the chain of events or state of the universe requires an extra explanation.
- [Leibniz cosmological argument](#), uses a chain of explanations rather than a chain of causes. It depends on the premise that "everything that exists requires an explanation"; this concept is known as the [principle of sufficient reason](#).

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## Formal Argument

The argument runs like this:

1. Everything that exists must have a cause.
2. If you follow the chain of events backwards through time, [it cannot go back infinitely](#), so eventually you arrive at the first cause.

3. This cause must, itself, be uncaused.
4. But nothing can exist without a cause, except for God.
5. Therefore, God exists.

## Counter-arguments

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Many of the criticisms of the [Unmoved mover](#) argument apply here.

### Infinite regress

Main Article: [Infinite regress does not occur](#)

The most concise answer to this argument is: "[Who created God?](#)", which in turn raises the question "Who created God's creator?", and so on ad infinitum. This known as an infinite regress or "[It's turtles all the way down](#)".

It is not necessarily impossible for there to be an infinite chain of causes and effects. Among scientists, it is widely agreed that our universe began with the Big Bang. but we don't know what occurred in the first split second after the Big Bang, nor can we comment on anything that came before it, as no experiments have yet been devised that could test any hypotheses about these early moments. (For further discussion on this topic, see the [Big Bang](#) article.)

Some have claimed that with an infinite past, we could never get to now. Flip the infinity: does an infinity of seconds not stretch forward into the future, eternally? Starting from an infinite future, can you go a second before that, and a second before that, ad infinitum, and get to now?

Possible response: [Second law of thermodynamics implies the universe is of finite age](#)

### Why assume the first cause is god-like?

Main Article: [Which god?](#)

Natural processes and multiple creators are not ruled out.

Even if we grant that a first cause exists, it makes no sense to assume that it is any kind of god, let alone [Yahweh](#). The idea of an intelligent, universe-creating god "just existing" is **far** more difficult to explain than the universe itself "just existing". [Intelligence](#) is one of the most complex things we are aware of in the universe. To assume the existence of a being who is so intelligent that it can design an entire universe, as well as micromanage the personal lives of billions of people on earth through prayer, would require an enormous amount of explanation.

### Special pleading regarding God existing outside of time

There is a contradiction between the first statement and the second statement. If "everything that exists has a cause" then there cannot exist anything that does not

have a cause, which means that there is no first cause. Either some things can exist without causes, or nothing can. It can't be both ways. God is considered to be exempt from infinite regress by [special pleading](#).

Changing "Everything that exists has a cause" to "Everything that *begins* to exist has a cause" produces a variant known as the [Kalam](#) cosmological argument.

Christians try to avoid [regress](#) of God by saying "God does not need a cause because He is outside of time." This is a glib non-answer. If all that is required to get around the first cause argument is an entity that exists outside of time, then all we need to do is postulate a single particle that exists outside of time and triggered the Big Bang. It need not have any additional powers. Besides, this particle might even exist, depending on how you define "outside of time." Photons (light particles) do not experience time, since they move at the speed of light. Therefore, according to this argument, light can pop into existence without cause.

Theists will object that this particle should have a cause. But they have already refuted this argument by granting that there exists an uncaused cause in the first place. If God can exist without a cause, why not a particle? Why not the universe? It may be the universe is the necessarily existent being and it is impossible for it to be in any other state.

## **Not all events necessarily have causes**

*Main Article:* [Not all events necessarily have causes](#)

The argument asserts that "everything that exists has a cause". However, this is arguably a false statement and a [hasty generalization](#). It is possible that some events, particular on the quantum scale, do not have causes (or at least we do not fully understand the cause at this time).

Some versions of the cosmological argument rely on chains of explanations starting from observed phenomena. However, no such explanation may exist and the phenomena might be a "brute fact". This is known as the [Glendower problem](#).

## **Unparsimonious explanation**

*Main Article:* [Ultimate 747 gambit](#)

The God hypothesis is not only unnecessary, it is not [parsimonious](#). In order to explain something apparently designed and which cannot create itself, a being is conjured into existence which would require even more unlikely explanation.

## **A-priori arguments cannot establish matters of fact**

Main Article: [Proof by logic](#)

Overall, this argument is an example of a [proof by logic](#), where philosophers attempt to "demonstrate" god with a logical syllogism alone, devoid of any confirming evidence. This is arguably inappropriate for establishing matters of fact.

## See also

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- [Unmoved mover](#)
- [Argument from contingency](#)

# Common consent argument for the existence of God

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(Redirected from [Majority argument](#))

The **common consent argument for the existence of God** states that if most people believe God exists, then he does exist. It is a form of [argumentum ad populum](#) (appeal to majority).

*"As the human intellect, though weak, is not essentially perverted, there is a certain presumption of the truth of any opinion held by many human minds, requiring to be rebutted by assigning some other real or possible cause for its prevalence. And this consideration has a special relevance to the inquiry concerning the foundations of theism, inasmuch as no argument for the truth of theism is more commonly invoked or more confidently relied on, than the general assent of mankind."*

— John Stuart Mill

It is sometimes combined with [argument from divine sense](#) or the claim that [atheists know there is a God](#).

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## The argument

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The argument runs: <sup>[1]</sup>

1. Belief in God occurs across cultures <sup>[2]</sup> and throughout history.
2. They can be right or wrong about the existence of God.
3. It is plausible that they are not wrong.
4. Therefore God exists.

### Variant: fastest growing religion

*"Islam is the largest spreading religion in the western world and not because Muslims have more children than others. More than 20000 Americans convert to Islam each year. 4000 have converted to Islam in Germany this year alone.*

*Thousands are converting to Islam in Latin America. WHY? <sup>[3]</sup>"*

## Counter arguments

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This is a classic [argumentum ad populum](#).

### Each religion considered separately is not a majority

Atheists are members of all of the following sets:

- Non-Christian,
- Non-Catholic,
- Non-Muslim,
- Non-Hindu,
- Non-Sikh,
- Non-Jew,
- e.t.c, each of which is a majority.

### Which God?

[No particular God](#) is supported by the argument.

There are large numbers of believers in different religions. Since multiple incompatible conclusions are supported by the argument it is a [broken compass argument](#).

## Naturalistic explanation

Humans may have some commonly occurring beliefs but that does not make that rational or true. The fact that religion occurs throughout history and in all cultures might be due to natural processes, such as human [psychology](#) and [cognition](#) produce tendencies to hold certain beliefs.

*"Our beliefs don't arise only from well-evaluated reasoning, but from wishful thinking, self-deception, self-aggrandizement, gullibility, false memories, visual illusions, and other mental glitches. <sup>[4]</sup>"*

For many years, most people believed that the [Earth was the center and most important feature](#) of the [universe](#). Millions of people believe that [astrology](#) works. Neither is true.

## Recognised Authority Exception

One special case is that in which a statement is said to be true because it is believed by most of the experts in the field (*9 out of 10 dentists recommend Brand X toothpaste!*). For example, if most astronomers say that the Earth revolves around the Sun instead of the other way around, then that is very likely to be true. In this case, however, we are trusting the judgment of people who have carefully studied the matter. In effect, we are trusting that the experts have reached their conclusions through valid arguments based on careful observation, so there is no need for us to research the matter ourselves. This type of argument is often reliable, but not always. After all, scientific knowledge is never perfect and complete. However, for most "mature" scientific fields, the likelihood of a complete reversal of views — such as moving the Earth from the center of the universe to the outskirts of one unremarkable galaxy among millions — is incredibly, and ever increasingly, small.

Within the ad populum fallacy is the fallacy of [appealing to authority](#), since this argument assumes that the majority hold the authority regarding truth. Counter to the example of the 10 dentists, theological belief is not a skill developed by professionals of the field; rather, it is something accessible to all upon reflection. Under this framework, appealing to theological authority (i.e. the authority of those claiming Christianity to be true) is another fallacy within this argument.

## Arrogance of disagreeing with majority view

Some apologists argue it is arrogant to dissent from the majority view regarding the existence of God. However, their religion was not always in a majority. Does that make it untrue during this time?

*"Isn't it somewhat arrogant to suggest that countless churches and people (including men like Abraham Lincoln) are all radically in error in their view of the Bible? <sup>[5]</sup>"*

Also, the accusation of arrogance is an [ad hominem](#) argument that has nothing to do with the existence of God.

## Variant: argument from the consensus of mystics

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Many variants of the argument could be proposed that consider a limited group of people. Mystics might be more "qualified" to comment on religion but this is an [argument from authority](#). <sup>[4]</sup>

However, this variant suffers from the same problems as the original argument. It is rather like saying "astrology is true because most astrologers believe it".

Also, the experiences of mystics probably can be explained by natural processes.

## Religions are popular because the truth would be apparent

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*"omit those religions [...] that are not widespread, because usually the truth of a right religion is so apparent that many would follow it."<sup>[6]</sup>*

That truth would be apparent and that people would seek the truth are unsupported claims.

## References

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1. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>[1]</sup>
2. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>[2]</sup>
3. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>[3]</sup>
4. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>4.0</sup> <sup>4.1</sup> Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, [36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction](#), 2011
5. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>[4]</sup>
6. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>[5]</sup>

## See also

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- [Argument from personal experience](#), this is often combined with the argument above.

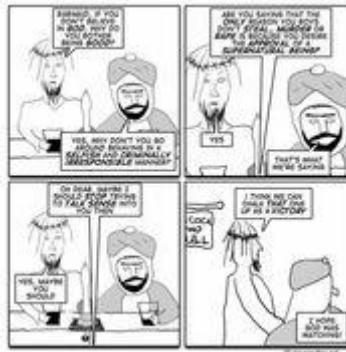
## External links

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- Thomas Kelly, [Consensus Gentium: Reflections on the 'Common Consent' Argument for the Existence of God](#)

## Moral argument

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*Jesus and Mo* lampoons one of the problems with the moral argument.

The simplest form of the **moral argument** is as follows:

1. If [God](#) does not exist, [morality](#) does not exist.
2. Morality exists.
3. Therefore, God exists.

This is a deductively valid argument, which is to say if its premises are true its conclusion cannot be false. The key question is whether or not the premises are true.

The first premise is by far the most often-disputed premise in the argument. While many religious believers take the first premise for granted, the reasons for thinking it true are not clear, and there are some serious objections to it.

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# Arguments for the first premise

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## Famous atheists rejected morality

Though this line of argumentation is popular among religious apologists, it clearly commits the fallacy of appealing to authority, and that is not its only problem. Many nontheists who have rejected conventional views of morality have done so on grounds independent of their views on the existence of God. Also, it requires selectively quoting authorities, because many nontheists--indeed, many theists--have rejected the first premise of the moral argument. Finally, it is trivially easy to construct a similar argument against theism, for example: "John Calvin did not believe in free will, therefore 'If God exists, free will does not exist,' but free will does exist, therefore God does not exist." Even if Calvin had good arguments for his stance on free will being entailed by theism, non-Calvinistic theists will not be swayed by the mere citation of Calvin's authority, nor should they be.

## Hitler and Stalin were atheists

*Main article:* [20th century atrocities](#)

The basic fallacy of this argument is similar to the one in the first, though it could be considered an example of guilt by association rather than an appeal to authority. Furthermore, the historical

accuracy of the argument can be questioned. [Hitler's](#) theistic proclamations are well documented,<sup>[1]</sup> and anti-religious quotes attributed to him are apparently inauthentic. He seems to have held to basic doctrines of Christianity, in spite of rather unorthodox changes, such as his belief that Jesus was an Aryan and Paul corrupted Christianity with proto-Bolshevism. Stalin was an atheist, but given that this is one of many beliefs he held, it is unclear why his actions should be attributed to his atheism. For example, though many would be surprised by this, Stalin opposed mainstream theories of evolution on the grounds that they were too capitalistic. Stalin's rejection of evolution could just as easily be named the source of his crimes as his rejection of God, and indeed his rejection of evolution arguably sheds more light on the ideological dogmatism at the heart of the Soviet regime.

## **If God does not exist, humans are just animals**

One snappy response to this argument is "Humans are animals whether or not God exists," which has indeed been the consensus view among taxonomists since Aristotle. Though this point may seem trivial, beneath it is the deeper point that it is hard to see how God's existing or not existing changes the status of humans. If the theist insists on claiming that human beings are worthless on their innate attributes alone, it is hard to see how God could change this situation; see [Appeal to emotion](#). It also rests on the assumption that animals do (or would) not have any sort of relationship with or ability to worship a god. While this may be the case, we do not and can not know this for certain. The truth is however that humans are animals, and just because this fact may not be liked by some does not make it any less true. In addition one could ask *"so what? Why presuppose that being an animal is a bad thing?"*

## **Moral law requires a Lawgiver**

Though we sometimes use the same words to talk about moral principles and human legislation, closer inspection calls into doubt the claim that there is a strong analogy between them. Human laws can be changed if the government wills it and follows correct procedures, but moral principles are typically thought to be unchanging. Also, it is possible to have a bad human law, but it is impossible to have a bad moral principle. In response to this second argument, it could be claimed that amoral laws are analogous to acts of a lower body that violate acts of a higher body which the lower body is responsible. This seems intuitively wrong, however: the wrong in a national law relegating part of the population to sub-human status seems very different, and more serious, than the wrong in a local law that contradicts a state. This argument is built on an [equivocation](#), and is fallacious on those grounds.

## **God's rewards and punishments needed to make morality in one's own self interest**

Usually, this argument is not stated so baldly. A more typical statement is "we admire people who sacrifice their lives for others, but if there is no God who rewards self-sacrifice, then such people are being stupid." When the underlying assumption is stated explicitly, most people recoil. Most people do not believe that the ultimate maxim by which we should act is "look out only for your own self

interest." Though such a view is technically an ethical theory (known to philosophers as ethical egoism), it is not what most people mean when they talk about morality. It seems that if ethical egoism is true, then the second premise of the moral argument is false, at least in the normally understood sense.

## **Absolute morality requires an absolute standard**

Statements of this argument are often unclear, but it seems to rest on an equivocation of the term "absolute," in much the same way that the Lawgiver argument rests on an equivocation of the term "law." The two relevant senses here are "applicable in all cases" (a characteristic typically applied to moral principles) and "omnipotent, omniscient, etc." (a characteristic typically assigned to God).

There is no reason to think that the first sense entails the second sense.

## **Arguments against the first premise**

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### **Circular definition/no definition of "moral"**

A common understanding of "moral" is assumed - why? The word "moral" should be defined as soon as it's introduced - this definition can't include reference to a god without the argument becoming circular, and if it *doesn't* include reference to a god, then in what sense is a god necessary for the concept?

For example, *why* does the apologist consider rape to be wrong (assuming they do)? "It is contrary to God's nature" is begging the question; "because the victim suffers needlessly" would require subsequent proof that the victim *wouldn't* suffer in a *godless* universe. ("There wouldn't be a universe at all without a god" and the argument folds into First Cause *et al.*)

### **The Euthyphro dilemma**

This is perhaps the most famous objection to the second premise. The [Euthyphro dilemma](#) is found in Plato's *Euthyphro*, in which Socrates asks the question, "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" In layman's terms this would be, "Is that which is good commanded by God *because* it's good, or is it good because God commands it?" Both options are problematic for those who would claim morality is dependent upon God.

If God is free to decide what is good, and it is good by virtue of his decree, then God has no higher standard to answer to. Therefore his will may be seen as genuinely arbitrary. Although God once decreed that murder and theft are morally wrong, he might have declared the opposite just as easily, so then murder and theft would be right. This makes morality arbitrary, not what most theists mean to say in articulating the second premise of the moral argument.

If right and wrong are inherent to the action, regardless of God's decree, then God has nothing to do with the process. God doesn't set moral standards; he follows them, and is therefore irrelevant to morality (except to the extent that he can tell us things which we could not figure out for ourselves.)

If goodness is not something that a god *exhibits*, but something of which the god is the *source*, the statement "god is good" becomes a meaningless tautology. Consider the property "tastes like an apple". Many things that aren't apples exhibit this quality, but what does it mean to say that an *apple* tastes like an apple? Nothing; it simply cannot be any other way. Similarly, defining god as the source of the property "goodness", then applying that property back to god, is equivalent to saying "god is consistent with his own nature", which tells us nothing.

An effective summary of the argument was given by [Bertrand Russell](#):

*"The point I am concerned with is that, if you are quite sure there is a difference between right and wrong, then you are then in this situation: is that difference due to God's fiat or is it not? If it is due to God's fiat, then for God himself there is no difference between right and wrong, and it is no longer a significant statement to say that God is good."*

— [Why I Am Not a Christian](#)

One perceived way to get out of the dilemma is to say that, although God has the freedom to command immoral acts such as rape, he would never do such a thing because it goes against his character or nature.

In response, Michael Martin has argued that this doesn't solve anything because the dilemma can be reformulated in terms of God's character: "Is God's character the way it is because it is good or is God's character good simply because it is God's character?"<sup>[2]</sup> The structure of this modified dilemma is exactly the same as before, and it appears to be if anything harder to escape.

Another counter to ED is to take "good" outside the scope of command/endorsement and tie it to god's *nature*, as in "it is in god's *nature* that murder is wrong". However, the nature of X is intrinsic, applying only to X. "It is diamond's nature to be hard" is only meaningful when diamond's scratching other materials is being considered, and it is meaningless otherwise; diamond's hard nature has nothing to do with sapphire scratching quartz, for example. A theistic god is separate from the universe, so if Dave murders John, how can god's nature have any bearing on the situation?

## Moral truths as necessary truths

Richard Swinburne, a theistic philosopher, has argued that moral truths cannot depend on God because moral truths are necessary truths, existing in all possible worlds, including ones where God does not exist. This objection of Swinburne's was cited by Jeffery Jay Lowder in Lowder's debate with Phil Fernandes.<sup>[3]</sup> Keith Yandell, another theistic philosopher, raised a similar objection in his comments on the Craig-Flew debate.

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

This argument does not specify a particular God which is the source of a true objective moral standard. Even if one accepted the argument, one would be forced to decide which religion to follow by some other means. If one can determine which God is the "true" God without using this argument, how is the argument necessary in the first place?

Alternatively, if one cannot rationally find the correct religion, the argument undermines its own respect towards objective morality, by suggesting that morality comes from a source we cannot recognize. While this does not mean that the argument is false, it does imply that human beings can never legitimately understand whether they are acting rightly or wrongly.

Incidentally we can also ask, Which morality? [Christian morality](#) changes with history and varies according to which Christian individual or which Christian sect is interpreting Christianity.

## **Naturalistic pantheism**

Many atheists like to state that they are technically naturalistic pantheists, meaning that they believe that God is the universe, but in a way that rejects supernatural or paranormal elements.

Based on this, one can assert that there is, in fact, a Godly morality, but that the definition of God is the natural universe, and, therefore, morality is both objective and superior to human morality.

## **Argument is self-refuting**

One can argue that if God does not exist, an objectively provable existence of objective morality does not exist, and an objective need for objective morality to exist does not exist. Hence, the atheistic situation is no longer problematic.

The argument boils down to "objective morals exist, therefore god exists". Thus, the proposed definition of "moral" must simultaneously OMIT god (so the argument isn't circular, god being the conclusion) and REQUIRE god (in order to reach the conclusion at all). This is logically impossible.

Another way to look at it is, regardless of whether or not the premises have/require god or omit god, the argument is doomed to fail. If the premises have god in the sense of a being then the argument is circular, if the premises have god as a concept or omit god then the argument is invalid:

If the premises have god (the being) then the argument becomes circular because god the being, what the argument is trying to prove, is assumed as a premise.

If the premises have only the concept of god and not the being god, then the argument becomes an invalid argument of false equivocation. The premises have god in the sense of a mere concept, and the conclusion has god in the sense of an actual being. The two are not equivocal. For example the mere concept of a dragon is not equal to a real dragon. So no matter what the premises prove about the concept of god, it would not necessarily follow from those premises that there is an actual god. In other words, it is possible for the premises to prove something about the concept of god and thus be true but it can still be false that god as an actual being exists.

If the premises have nothing to do with god, then the argument has no validity because god is not a valid inference from the premises.

### **Argument from Ignorance**

The moral argument is also one from ignorance. Even if objective moral values and duties were proven to exist 100%, it doesn't follow that a god put them there. It may, for all we know have been aliens who put them there. Just because we don't know where morality came from, doesn't mean we should presuppose a god did it. This argument, in some ways therefore falls under the same category as the Teleological and Cosmological arguments.

### **Heaven precludes genuine charity**

If there is an omnipotent and perfectly just God and an everlasting reward, there is no reason to act morally except to secure one's own well-being in the afterlife, i.e. loving your brother can only be a rational means to one's own ends not the well-being of one's brother.

#### ***Premises***

1. If all else being equal my actions cause you to forego a good I have wronged you.
2. Heaven is a good that outweighs all Earthly goods.
3. In a perfectly just world, any wrong done to a person that can be compensated will be compensated.
4. God desires a perfectly just world.
5. God is omnipotent, therefore capable of compensating any wrong.

#### ***Argument***

1. If my actions caused you to forego Heaven (for example by convincing you to reject God or seeing that you die before repenting) you would be wronged.  
(Premises 1, 2)

2. God desires to compensate any wrong. (Premises 3, 4)
3. God would compensate you for that wrong. (Premise 5, Argument 2)
4. No action of mine can deny you a good that makes all others trivial or otherwise affect your ultimate well-being. (Arguments 1, 3)
5. No action of mine can deny you Heaven or otherwise affect your ultimate well-being. (Premise 2, Argument 4)

**Therefore**

My actions are irrelevant to your ultimate well-being (Argument 5) assuming a just God and an eternal reward (Premises 1-5).

## Secular morality

Main article: [Secular morality](#)

Finally, it can in general be claimed that there is a specific, well-founded theory of morality that leaves God out of the picture. This is a complex topic and is dealt with in full by the above-linked article. One thing is worth noting here: some theists appear to think that it constitutes a valid link in the moral argument to simply demand a secular theory of morality without giving any reason to think that theistic theories are more likely to be successful. This is clearly fallacious, and debaters should not fall into this trap. Meta-ethics, like most areas of philosophy, has unresolved debates, but pointing to an unresolved philosophical debate is no argument for the existence of God. To show that the moral argument is unsuccessful, one need only show that we should not accept the second premise. Full development of secular theory of morality may be helpful here, but it is not necessary.

## Other formulations of the moral argument

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### Normativity of morality

This formulation of the moral argument relies on the assumption of normativity, that is to say, that the awareness of morality is a more or less universal experience among humans. Most people recognize that, for example, murder is wrong. From there, a theist claims that this universal awareness must come from some ultimate source, which is God. <sup>[1]</sup>

To put it concisely:

1. It appears to human beings that moral normativity exists.
2. The best explanation of moral normativity is that it is grounded in God.
3. Therefore God exists.



This version of the moral argument may sometimes be used by theists as [red herring](#) when responding to arguments about the moral nature of God. For instance, a person who points out the inherent cruelty of exterminating 99% of the earth's population, as in the story of [Noah's ark](#), or takes issue with the apparent Biblical support of [slavery](#) and [rape](#), may quickly expect to be countered with this claim:

"You recognize mass murder/slavery/rape as a **bad** thing, so you must have some standard to judge that against. If there was no God, then you'd have no rational reason to say that those things aren't good."

## Counter-apologetic responses to normativity

1. Although the awareness of SOME sort of right and wrong is apparently universal, many specific details differ across cultures and time periods. In the case of slavery, for example, the practice was once universally accepted in the southern United States, and many anti-abolitionists even quoted the Bible to justify the practice. (See the main [slavery](#) article for more details.) This indicates that morality has a strong cultural component to it, and is tied up in evolving notions of [secular morality](#).

In fact, this serves as an argument against the existence of God.

### Moral-Knowledge Argument

A recently proposed atheological argument is the Moral-Knowledge Argument, which can be expressed as follows: If the theists' version of god exists, then he is a being who is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent. Since this god is benevolent and his ethics are supposedly morally good for humanity, he would want all human beings to know his ethics perfectly. And since this god is omnipotent, it would be within his capacity to make sure that all human beings know his ethics perfectly. However, all human beings do not know his ethics perfectly, which is shown by their disagreeing about many moral values. Therefore, this version of god does not exist.

1. Other human perceptions also have the appearance of being normative. For instance, most people agree that chocolate is "delicious," while dirt is "not delicious." By the same reasoning as the argument from normative morality, it could be said that there must be some ultimate standard for deliciousness, and that standard must be God, the ultimate tasty treat.

We could use a similar argument to prove that God is the definition of the perfect homosexual lover.

2. The fact that there may be an abstract standard of perfect goodness that an individual strives to achieve, does not indicate that this standard represents an existing object. For example, golfing a perfect game would yield a score of 18. However, even though no one in history has ever golfed an 18, this is the the best attainable score according to the rules of the game. It is quite possible to have a theoretical ideal, yet not have any concrete instance of that ideal. Therefore, we could say: "Yes, this thing that you call 'God' could be our standard for morality. However, *this tells us nothing about whether or not God exists.*"

## The Immoral Imperative

1. Christians are called to evangelize and share the gospel as a command from God. The mercy of God is shared for the purpose of conversion which treats people as a means. According to Kant, treating anyone as a means rather than an end in themselves is immoral, therefore, Christians are immoral as is the command.

A possible solution to this dilemma is in reassessing the command from God. If the gospel of Christianity is not specifically for the sake of the gospel itself, nor is it a means to God's end, but rather is the means by which a person's life is improved, the individual becomes the end, thus making it moral under the Kantian mindset. The person "receiving" the evangelism (i.e. the gospel) is treated justly insofar as her personal improvement is the goal. This solution can only be upheld if the reality of "salvation" is in fact the reality of a better life.

## References

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1. [↑](#) C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 1943, Chapter 1
- Stan W. Wallace, ed. *Does God Exist?: The Craig-Flew Debate*. Ashgate, 2003.
  - Richard Swinburne. *The Existence of God*. Oxford University Press, 2004.
  - Richard C. Carrier. 'Hitler's Table Talk: Troubling Finds.' *German Studies Review* 26.3 (Oct 2003): 561-76.

## External Link

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- [Full text of the \*Euthyphro\* dialogue](#) by Plato
- [Moral Arguments for the Existence of God](#)
- [\[4\]](#)

# Ontological argument



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

## [Ontological argument](#)

The **ontological argument** was originally written by a Benedictine monk named Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his book *Proslogion* in 1078. [Ontology](#) is the branch of [metaphysics](#) that deals with the nature of being and existence. The argument is based on the greatest idea, God, must exist because it is greater to exist than to not exist.

Even Anselm's contemporaries recognized its flaws; another monk, Guanilo of Marmoutiers, is remembered for using Anselm's reasoning to "prove" that the perfect island exists in *On Behalf of the Fool*.

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## The argument

The classic **ontological argument** for the existence of [God](#) runs as follows:

1. I have an idea of God as the greatest conceivable being.
2. A being can exist merely as an idea or as an idea and in reality.
3. It is greater to exist in reality too rather than just as an idea.
4. If I think of this greatest conceivable being as existing merely as an idea, then I can think of a greater being, i.e. a being that exists in reality too.
5. This greatest conceivable being must exist in reality too, i.e. God exists.

## Counter arguments

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In this argument, existence is given as one of God's attributes as part of the definition: if X is God, then X has the property of existence. This is [logically equivalent](#) to "if X does not exist, then X is not God." It does not prove that there are any entities that actually match the definition.

### Existence is not an attribute or predicate

Existence can hardly ever be considered an attribute, as something non-existent cannot have attributes. [\[1\]](#) Therefore, making conclusions about existence of an entity based on its properties is not logically sound. In short, this argument boils down to "show me a god, and I'll show you an existing god." It is a form of [circular reasoning](#) because the existence is built into the assumptions.

Here are some examples of this proof that highlight the fallacy.

Unicorns:

1. Let us define a unicorn as a magical equine being that has one horn, and that exists.
2. By that definition, such a being must necessarily exist.
3. Therefore unicorns exist.

Shangri-La:

1. Shangri-La is the greatest place on earth.
2. A place that exists is greater than one that doesn't.
3. Therefore, Shangri-La exists.

Hercules:

1. Hercules is the greatest warrior in history.
2. A warrior that existed is greater than one that did not.
3. Therefore, Hercules existed.

### Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

No specific God or religion is supported by the argument.

The argument supports [pantheism](#) better than [monotheism](#):

1. A being that contains all the parts of another plus one extra part is the greater being.
2. There cannot exist any part that is not a part of the greatest possible being.
3. Therefore, the greatest possible being encompasses the entire universe -- hence Pantheism.
4. If 1. is false, there is no reason to believe that the greatest possible being encompasses anything -- the greatest possible being is indistinguishable from nothing.
5. If 1. is false and 4. is false because the greatest possible being is the one that encompasses all intrinsically positive things and no intrinsically negative things, then "a being that exists is greater than one that does not" is not true unless existence is intrinsically good.

### **Affirming the consequent**

The argument also contains a [converse error](#). The second premise amounts to "*If a thing exists then it has greatness*," while the conclusion assumes the reverse: "*If a thing (the god) has greatness then it exists*."

### **Non sequitur**

Another problem with the classical version of the argument is that it is invalid. So even if the premises are true, the conclusion is not guaranteed to be true. The fourth premise is supposed to show that there is a contradiction in supposing the greatest conceivable being merely exists as an idea. This, at most, would show that when thinking of this being one would have to suppose this being exists. So even if there are no other problems with the argument, it only proves that I must think of God existing; it does not prove that there is a being actually out there that fits my idea.

### **An argument for the Devil**

An ontological argument can be used to prove the existence of the Devil.

1. I have an idea of the Devil as the worst conceivable being.
2. A being can exist merely as an idea or as an idea and in reality.
3. It is worse for the worst conceivable being to exist in reality too rather than just as an idea.
4. If I think of this worst conceivable being as existing merely as an idea, then I can think of a worse being, i.e. a being that exists in reality too.
5. This worst conceivable being must exist in reality too, i.e. the Devil exists.

## Gasking's proof

A piece of parody for the non-existence of god is as follows: [\[2\]](#)

1. The creation of the universe is the greatest achievement imaginable.
2. The merit of an achievement consists of its intrinsic greatness and the ability of its creator.
3. The greater the handicap to the creator, the greater the achievement (would you be more impressed by Turner painting a beautiful landscape or a blind one-armed dwarf?)
4. The biggest handicap to a creator would be non-existence
5. Therefore if we suppose that the universe is the creation of an existing creator, we can conceive a greater being — namely, one who created everything while not existing.
6. Therefore, God does not exist.

## Assumption that existence is greater than non-existence

Assuming that existence and non-existence can actually be properties of something, there is no logical justification for existence being greater than non-existence

## Proof by logic

Main Article: [Proof by logic](#)

The argument effectively defines God into existence without considering factual evidence.

## Variant arguments

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### Modal ontological argument

This is a version of the argument defended by such apologists as [Alvin Plantinga](#). The premises are as follows:

- P(1): It is possible that God exists.
- P(2): If it is possible that God exists, then God exists in some possible worlds.
- P(3): If God exists in some possible worlds, then God exists in all possible worlds.
- P(4): If God exists in all possible worlds, then God exists in the actual world.
- P(5): If God exists in the actual world, then God exists.
- C(1): Therefore, God exists.

### ***Counter arguments***

The Modal Ontological Argument is a deductive argument, which means that in order to deny the conclusion of the argument one must show the form of the argument to be invalid, that at least one of the premises are false, or that the argument commits some other fallacy.

As a way to show the argument contains a fallacy, one could substitute something like a necessarily existing unicorn into the argument instead of God.

- P(1)': It is possible that a necessarily existing unicorn exists.
- P(2)': If it is possible that a necessarily existing unicorn exists, then a necessarily existing unicorn exists in some possible worlds.
- P(3)': If a necessarily existing unicorn exists in some possible worlds, then a necessarily existing unicorn exists in all possible worlds.
- P(4)': If a necessarily existing unicorn exists in all possible worlds, then a necessarily existing unicorn exists in the actual world.
- P(5)': If a necessarily existing unicorn exists in the actual world, then a necessarily existing unicorn exists.
- C(1)': Therefore, a necessarily existing unicorn exists.

The expected objection is that P(1)' begs the question; it builds in necessary existence into the being in question from the beginning. The counter is that P(1) from the original modal argument does the same thing with the idea of God as a necessary being. In the original argument the question begging is, maybe, not quite as obvious, but the necessity of the existence of God is what causes P(3) to be purportedly true.

Another way to debunk the argument could be to attempt to show P(1) is false. To show that it is impossible that God exists you would need to show that the properties of God are logically incoherent, and therefore, God would not exist in any possible world.

Another way to debunk the argument would be to point out that the argument relies upon equivocation between different definitions of "possible". Modal logic (which is used in P(2), P(3), and P(4)) refers to subjunctive possibility, while P(1) refers to epistemic possibility, which is not used in modal logic.

### **Reverse modal ontological argument**

The Modal Ontological argument depends upon the innocence of the first premise. One might be inclined to accept that it is merely possible that God

exists but then be surprised you've agreed to too much. Modal logic cuts both ways though. An equally innocent premise can lead to the opposite conclusion:

- P(1) It is possible that God does not exist, i.e. there is some possible world where God does not exist.
- P(2) God is defined as a necessary being, i.e. exists in all possible worlds.
- P(3) If there is one possible world where God does not exist, then there is no possible world in which God exists in all possible worlds.
- P(4) If there is no possible world in which God exists in all possible worlds, then it is impossible that God exists.
- C(1) It is impossible that God exists.

P(1) is the innocent enough premise, that God might not exist. P(2) is the definition of God borrowed from the theist. P(3) follows from S5 modal logic where all worlds are accessible to each other, so if something is possible in one world, it is possible in all worlds. Logical possibility and necessity is generally thought to be captured by S5 modal logic. It is also the simplest modal logic and most often encountered. The Modal Ontological Argument above depends upon S5 as well. P(4) is just a translation: "No possible world" means "is impossible", and "exists in all possible worlds" means "exists", at least according to P(2).

## References

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1. [↑](#) Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Ontological Arguments, substantive revision Jul 15 2011 [\[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) Gasking's Proof [\[2\]](#)

## External links

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- [\[3\]](#) A comprehensive and shorter refutation
- [\[4\]](#)
- [\[5\]](#)
- [\[6\]](#)



# Transcendental argument



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[\*\*\*Transcendental argument\*\*\*](#)

The **transcendental argument** for the existence of God (TAG) attempts to show that logic, science, ethics (and generally every fact of human experience and knowledge) are not meaningful apart from a preconditioning belief in the existence of God.

*"Concepts existed before us. Concepts require a mind. That mind is God. [\[1\]](#)"*

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## Background information

The standard requirement to the argument is that there are transcendental things such as science, logic, morality, and mathematics which are not physically in existence which are also part of reality (when you stop believing in them, they don't go away). Since these systems exist, \*waves arms\*, God exists.

The argument is popular within [presuppositionalism](#) and [the associated apologetics](#).

Presuppositionalism, however, tends to reverse the argument and simply begin at the conclusion. Logic depends on God, therefore you can't use logic to argue against God as that would be contradictory.

It is worth noting that TAG presupposes Platonic epistemology, that the knowledge of abstract ideas is innate and that knowledge of these abstract ideas is absolute. While this view is sometimes defended on the basis that the knowledge of abstract propositions, like the Laws of Logic and Geometry, can be located through an *a priori* investigation.

## Versions of TAG

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### Version 1

That is, knowledge cannot be obtained absolutely unless the source of that knowledge is itself an absolute source (read: being/God). Therefore, either you subconsciously believe in an absolute being that upholds and makes absolute the [laws](#) of the universe/[morality](#) or you do not—and *cannot*—know anything for certain.

- There are some objective logical absolutes.
- We can have concepts of these logical absolutes.
- These logical absolutes are not physical (you can't find them within the natural world).
- These logical absolutes are therefore conceptual.
- Concepts require a mind.
- Since the logical absolutes are true everywhere they must exist within an infinite mind.
- That mind is God.
- God exists.

### Version 2

Other iterations of the same general theme exist.

- Logic is rational, but atheism presupposes that everything comes from material sources.
- Logic isn't material, so atheism lacks any objective source for logic.
- Without an objective source for logic, atheism cannot employ logic.
- Therefore atheism is self refuting.
- Since atheism is refuted, theism must be true.
- God exists.

### CARM.Org Version

This is the version of the Transcendental argument presented by [Matt Slick](#) of the CARM:

1. Logical Absolutes

1. Law of Identity

1. Something is what it is, and isn't what it is not. Something that exists has a specific nature.
2. For example, a cloud is a cloud, not a rock. A fish is a fish, not a car.

2. Law of Non-Contradiction

1. Something cannot be both true and false at the same time in the same sense.
2. For example, to say that the cloud is not a cloud would be a contradiction since it would violate the first law. The cloud cannot be what it is and not what it is at the same time.

3. Law of Excluded Middle (LEM)

1. A statement is either true or false, without a middle ground.
2. "I am alive" is either true or false. "You are pregnant" is either true or false.
  1. Note one: "This statement is false" is not a valid statement (not logically true) since it is self-refuting and is dealt with by the Law of Non-contradiction. Therefore, it does not fall under the LEM category since it is a self-contradiction.
  2. Note two: If we were to ignore note one, then there is a possible paradox here. The sentence "this statement is false" does not fit this Law since if it is true, then it is false. Paradoxes occur only when we have absolutes. Nevertheless, the LEM is valid except for the paradoxical statement cited.
  3. Note three: If we again ignore note one and admit a paradox, then we must acknowledge that paradoxes exist only within the realm of absolutes.

2. Logical absolutes are truth statements such as:

1. That which exists has attributes and a nature.
  1. A cloud exists and has the attributes of whiteness, vapor, etc. It has the nature of water and air.
  2. A rock is hard, heavy, and is composed of its rock material (granite, marble, sediment, etc.).
2. Something cannot be itself and not itself at the same time.
  1. It cannot be true to state that a rock is not a rock.
3. Something cannot bring itself into existence.

1. In order for something to bring itself into existence, it has to have attributes in order to perform an action. But if it has attributes, then it already has existence. If something does not exist, it has no attributes and can perform no actions. Therefore, something cannot bring itself into existence.
4. Truth is not self-contradictory.
  1. It could not be true that you are reading this and not reading this at the same time in the same sense. It is either true or false that you are reading this.
5. Therefore, Logical Absolutes are absolutely true. They are not subjectively true; that is, they are not sometimes true and sometimes false, depending on preference or situation. Otherwise, they would not be absolute.
3. Logical Absolutes form the basis of rational discourse.
  1. If the Logical Absolutes are not absolute, then truth cannot be known.
  2. If the Logical Absolutes are not absolute, then no rational discourse can occur.
    1. For example, I could say that a square is a circle (violating the law of identity), or that I am and am not alive in the same sense at the same time (violating the law of non-contradiction).
    2. But no one would expect to have a rational conversation with someone who spoke in contradictory statements.
  3. If Logical Absolutes are not always true, then it might be true that something can contradict itself, which would make truth unknowable and rational discourse impossible. But, saying that something can contradict itself can't be true.
  4. But since we know things are true (I exist, you are reading this), then we can conclude that logical statements are true. Otherwise, we would not be able to rationally discuss or know truth.
  5. If they are not the basis of rational discourse, then we cannot know truth or error since the laws that govern rationality are not absolute. This would allow people to speak irrationally, i.e., blue sleeps faster than Wednesday.
4. Logical Absolutes are transcendent.
  1. Logical Absolutes are not dependent on space.
    1. They do not stop being true dependent on location. If we travel a million light years in a direction, logical absolutes are still true.
  2. Logical Absolutes are not dependent on time.

1. They do not stop being true dependent on time. If we travel a billion years in the future or past, logical absolutes are still true.
3. Logical Absolutes are not dependent on people. That is, they are not the product of human thinking.
  1. People's minds are different. What one person considers to be absolute may not be what another considers to be absolute. People often contradict each other. Therefore, Logical Absolutes cannot be the product of human, contradictory minds.
  2. If Logical Absolutes were the product of human minds, they would cease to exist if people ceased to exist, which would mean they would be dependent on human minds. But this cannot be so per the previous point.
5. Logical Absolutes are not dependent on the material world.
  1. Logical Absolutes are not found in atoms, motion, heat, under rocks, etc.
  2. Logical Absolutes cannot be photographed, frozen, weighed, or measured.
  3. Logical Absolutes are not the product of the physical universe, since that would mean they were contingent on atoms, motion, heat, etc., and that their nature was dependent on physical existence.
    1. If their nature were dependent upon physical existence, they would cease to exist when the physical universe ceases to exist.
  4. But, if the universe did not exist, logical absolutes are still true.
    1. For example, if the universe did not exist, it is still true that something cannot bring itself into existence; that is, anything that did exist would have an identity, and whatever could exist could not be itself and not itself at the same time.
    2. Therefore, they are not dependent on the material world.
6. Logical Absolutes are conceptual by nature.
  1. Logic is a process of the mind. Logical absolutes provide the framework for logical thought processes. Therefore, Logical Absolutes are conceptual by nature.
  2. Expanded: Logical absolutes are either conceptual by nature or they are not.
    1. If they are conceptual by nature, then they are not dependent upon the physical universe for their existence.
    2. If they are non-conceptual by nature, then:
      1. What is their nature?

2. If it is denied that Logical Absolutes are either conceptual or physical, then there must be a 3rd (or 4th...) option. What would that option be?
  3. If another option cannot be logically offered, then the only options available to us are conceptual and physical.
  4. Since logic is not a property of physical nature (see point 5 above), then we must conclude that they are conceptual by nature.
  5. Simply "denying" that Logical Absolutes are either conceptual or physical nature isn't sufficient.
7. Thoughts reflect the mind
1. A person's thoughts reflect what he or she is.
  2. Absolutely perfect thoughts reflect an absolutely perfect mind.
  3. Since the Logical Absolutes are transcendent, absolute, are perfectly consistent, and are independent of the universe, then they reflect a transcendent, absolute, perfect, and independent mind.
  4. We call this transcendent, absolute, perfect, and independent mind God.

## 8. Counter arguments

### 9. Fallacy of equivocation: 5.1-4

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10. The first major problem with the argument occurs in 5.1-4 (carm.org version)
11. 5. Logical Absolutes are not dependent on the material world.
12. 1. Logical Absolutes are not found in atoms, motion, heat, under rocks, etc.
13. 2. Logical Absolutes cannot be photographed, frozen, weighed, or measured.
14. 3. Logical Absolutes are not the product of the physical universe, since that would mean they were contingent on atoms, motion, heat, etc., and that their nature was dependent on physical existence.
15. 1. If their nature were dependent upon physical existence, they would cease to exist when the physical universe ceases to exist.
16. 4. But, if the universe did not exist, logical absolutes are still true.
17. 1. For example, if the universe did not exist, it is still true that something cannot bring itself into existence; that is, anything that did exist would have an identity, and whatever could exist could not be itself and not itself at the same time.
18. 2. Therefore, they are not dependent on the material world.
19. This is a fallacy of equivocation. Two things of separate value are equated to be the same thing. The page on Wikipedia uses the word 'light' as an example:
20. A feather is light.
21. What is light cannot be dark.
22. Therefore, a feather cannot be dark.

23. There are actually two separate aspects of logical absolutes to be considered. The conceptual statements such as 'A=A', and the physical underpinning on which the conceptual statement is based.
24. It is true that the conceptual statement that 'A=A' cannot be photographed, frozen weighed or measured. It is an abstract. However the semantic statement refers to the physical nature of things that do exist and are material and are absolutely contingent on physical existence. Atoms are [Atoms]. Motion is not, [not motion]. Heat is not [heat and not heat] at the same time.
25. 5.1-3 attempts to equate the conceptual semantic statement and the physical underpinning of that statement to be the same thing, and then continues in 6.1-2 to argue that the logical absolutes are only conceptual and therefore dependent on a mind. The logical absolutes are not arbitrary prescriptive conceptual statements about what logic can and can't do. They are descriptive statements about the nature of the reality we observe, on which the laws of formal logic are then based.
26. Furthermore, 5.4 is an unfounded assertion. If the universe did not exist, neither would the three logical absolutes as they would have nothing to apply to. If nothing existed there would be no A to equal A. The underpinning of the logical absolute statements are dependent on something existing. The logical absolutes themselves are simply a fundamental property of material existence.

## **27. Fallacy of division: 6.1**

28. The second major problem occurs in 6.1 (carm.org version).
29. 6.1 Logic is a process of the mind. Logical absolutes provide the framework for logical thought processes. Therefore, Logical Absolutes are conceptual by nature.
30. This is a fallacy of division. An attribute or property of a complete system is applied to an individual part of that system. The example given at Wikipedia uses an air plane as an analogy:
31. A Boeing 747 can fly unaided across the ocean.
32. A Boeing 747 has jet engines.
33. Therefore, one of its jet engines can fly unaided across the ocean.
34. Some other examples of Fallacy of Division would be:
35. I have a concept of an apple, therefore the actual apple I'm holding in my hand is also conceptual
36. My lust is emotional, therefore the object of my lust is also emotional.
37. A car can be driven. Therefore the design of a car can also be driven.
38. The logical absolutes provide the underpinning and framework for the structure of formal logic. However, the fact that formal logic is of a purely conceptual nature does not necessarily mean that the underpinning of that formal logic is also purely conceptual.

39. As humans, we require linguistic *signifiers* in order to discuss the things and patterns we observe (i.e. the things and patterns *signified*), therefore the logical absolutes have a conceptual existence insofar as we need words to signify them. This approach entails that logical absolutes are discovered through a process of the mind, rather than constructed. Thus logical absolutes are not conceptual by nature. Instead, they are a physical property of reality—observed by humans and pointed to with language.
40. Presumably, the theist does not intend to challenge the idea that we discover logical absolutes rather than construct them. A formal system of logic that constructs rather than discovers absolutes within reality would be incoherent (what meaning could absolute have in this context?) and useless. Any idea could necessarily be true. We know this isn't the case. Rather, the theist's intention is to show that God constructs the logical absolutes. Which, being necessarily conceptual, cannot be truly absolute without a stable, unchanging source. Since concepts reside only in minds, and the only stable, unchanging mind is God's, then the existence of logical absolutes necessitates God. This, as demonstrated above, is the fallacy of division.

#### **41. False dichotomy: 6.2**

42. The third major problem occurs in 6.2 (carm.org version)
43. 6.2 Expanded: Logical absolutes are either conceptual by nature or they are not.
44. 1. If they are conceptual by nature, then they are not dependent upon the physical universe for their existence.
45. 2. If they are non-conceptual by nature, then:
46. 1. What is their nature?
47. 2. If it is denied that Logical Absolutes are either conceptual or physical, then there must be a 3rd (or 4th...) option. What would that option be?
48. 3. If another option cannot be logically offered, then the only options available to us are conceptual and physical.
49. 4. Since logic is not a property of physical nature (see point 5 above), then we must conclude that they are conceptual by nature.
50. 5. Simply "denying" that Logical Absolutes are either conceptual or physical nature isn't sufficient.
51. This attempts to set up a false dichotomy. This is where two options are presented as Boolean opposites (A or not A) where that is not necessarily the case (A or B).
52. If the logical absolutes are not physical and not conceptual there must be a 3rd or 4th option. What are they? The fact is that conceptual and physical existence are not a true dichotomy. In fact they are not even mutually exclusive.
- 53.



54. 6.2.2 - Claims that Logical Absolutes are either conceptual or physical. As is shown in the above sub-article for 5.1-4 Fallacy of Equivocation the logical absolutes have both a physical and conceptual counterpart. It isn't an either/or situation thus a 3rd option isn't required.
55. 6.2.4 - Claims that since logic is conceptual, the absolutes they are based on must also be conceptual. As is shown in the above sub-article 6.1 Fallacy of Division this is not the case.
56. It is also interesting to note, that by its very nature, this section of the argument specifically argues against the existence of anything spiritual, which doesn't leave much room for the theist assertion that a god exists somewhere outside of their mind, and also outside the physical reality we are able to observe and measure.

## **57. Special Pleading: 7.1-4**

58. The final conclusion of the TAG argument is also logically invalid.
59. 7. Thoughts reflect the mind
60. 1. A person's thoughts reflect what he or she is.
61. 2. Absolutely perfect thoughts reflect an absolutely perfect mind.
62. 3. Since the Logical Absolutes are transcendent, absolute, are perfectly consistent, and are independent of the universe, then they reflect a transcendent, absolute, perfect, and independent mind.
63. 4. We call this transcendent, absolute, perfect, and independent mind God.
64. Even ignoring all the major fallacies up until this point, and accepting the false premise that the logical absolutes are purely conceptual, the final conclusion also makes a case of special pleading. The fact that human minds are capable of conceiving of the logical absolutes to make this very argument, is proof that these concepts are not dependent on an absolutely perfect supreme transcendent mind.
65. This section of the argument is also related to the [ontological argument](#). Just because you semantically define something transcendent perfect and magical as existing doesn't mean it actually exists.

## **66. The Number 4 Summary**

67. To summarize, a simple analogy to the logical absolutes would be abstract mathematics. The number 4 is "transcendent" by the TAG definition. It isn't a 'thing' that 'exists'. It cannot be photographed, frozen, weighed, or measured. It is always the number 4. It always remains the same. It always remains true.
68. However, if there were no minds in existence to conceive of the number 4, the shape we currently call a square would still have the same number of sides it has now. It would not physically gain or lose any sides. The abstraction of the number 4 is conceptual, but the concept isn't dependent on a transcendent mind for the real world underpinning of the concept to remain true.

## Other Counter-arguments

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- TANG or the [Transcendental argument for the non-existence of God](#) attempts to show that such logical absolutes cannot be absolutes if they are subjective by being God based. God could simply ignore the number 7 or believe that killing children is good and the logical absolutes would change. Therefore, they would not be logical absolutes or objectively true but rather subject to the whims of God.
- It should always be remembered that theists are in the same position as non-theists once enough layers are peeled back. The goal of TAG and other presuppositionalist arguments is to stay on the offensive and keep asking "why" and "how do you account for" questions until you hit bedrock at "The just universe exists and behaves consistently". This is a brute fact and it makes no sense to ask for "why" beyond this point, however the TAG proponent will declare victory if you don't have an answer, then baldly assert that they do (God did it). This usually trips atheists up because they don't realize that they are being asked an impossible question that equally applies to ANY worldview, including the theistic one. Your goal should be to mirror the questions they ask you and go on the offensive yourself until you expose that they also don't have answers to the "why" question at the bottom of their worldview. You will find that TAG proponents are trying to account for the consistent behavior of nature by appealing to the consistent mind of a god that can't be accounted for! They can't account why god exists instead of not existing. He "just exists" for no reason and no cause, and just has the properties he has for no reason and no cause. His will is effective rather than ineffective, for no reason and no cause. In other words they cannot account for the existence or capabilities of the being they are appealing to as the foundation of logic! So they have actually accounted for nothing. They've just pushed the question back a level. The argument relies on the [Münchhausen trilemma](#). If you keep asking "why" while rejecting accepted precepts you have to come down to a circular argument. However as stated above the trilemma can be used against the theist.
- So what? Many [non-theists](#), when they are backed against the wall, will admit that they know nothing with 100% certainty. Humans generally will prefer some explanation rather than no explanation. However, providing "some explanation" does not make the claims in the explanation true. [Absolute certainty](#) is in general meaningless as by definition one would have to be [omniscient](#) to acquire it. [Atheists](#) do not in general make claims to the absolute truth of things; this is usually the domain of the [theist](#).
- An example of what some may call absolutely certain is the idea that the [Sun](#) will rise tomorrow. To be truly absolute in certainty, you would require precognition; however, that is generally useless. It's much more accurate to state that based on the evidence

of many days prior as well as our understanding of chemistry and the composition of stars that the sun will not soon cease to rise.

- Even, for the sake of argument, accepting every point made, the only conclusion drawn is that there must be at all times intelligence. Unless God is defined only as a something capable of conceptualizing the rules of logic -- of which, most mammals by necessity are able to grasp in a rudimentary sense -- the existence of a god is still unsubstantiated.

- Reductio ad absurdum

The version of the transcendental argument for the existence of God which claims that the classical laws of logic depend upon God may be refuted simply by pointing out that its conclusion, if taken seriously, is absurd.

If the classical laws of logic depend upon God for their existence, then the classical laws of logic must not apply to God. If they did, this would be like a mother giving birth to her mother, a ceiling supporting itself in the air, or an effect causing itself or the cause of its parent cause.

- Since the law of the excluded middle would not apply to God: any statement about God, as well as its negation, may both be true. So, "God exists," and "God does not exist," may both be true. Demonstrating "God exists," would fail to imply that "God does not exist," is false.
- Since the law of non-contradiction would not apply to God: contradictory statements about God may be true. Therefore, "God exists and does not exist," may be true.
- Since the law of identity would not apply to God: God may be other than, or not, God.

If this variant of the transcendental argument for the existence of God is accurate, any attempt to think rationally about God proves itself absurd. This, of course, includes any and all logical arguments for the existence of God, including this variant of the transcendental argument for the existence of God. It would also render all other claims made concerning God meaningless.

P1 God does not exist. P2 Tag proposes that if god does not exist, then truth does not exist. P3 If god does not exist then P1 is true. Conclusion: from 2 and 3, TAG is not sound.

## Links

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## References

1. [↑ The Atheist Experience](#), episode #680, Caller quote at 0:14:30

## See Also

- [Equivocation](#)

- [Fallacy of division](#)
- [Fallacy of reification](#)
- [False dichotomy](#)
- [Special pleading](#)
- [Ontological argument](#)
- [Argument from the meaning of life](#)

## External Links

- [Christian Apologetics Research Ministries](#) – Matt Slicks website
- [Sorry, Denise but God didn't make numbers](#) – Article by Mark Chu-Carroll PhD on Good math, Bad math.
- [Slick Logic](#) – Youtube Theoretical BS run down on the TAG argument.
- [Atheist experience #593](#) – Youtube AE television debate between Matt D and Matt Slick.
- [Matt/Matt Debate](#) – Youtube Theoretical BS commentary of the atheist experience debate.

## Reference

- [Wikipedia:Transcendental argument for the existence of God](#) – Wikipedia article

## Argument from scripture



Which scripture should be used?

The **argument from scripture** is the argument that something is true because it is written in scripture, for example, that God exists because the Bible says God exists. It assumes that the scripture and its interpretation are reliable.

This argument is often justified with a related (and circular) argument, that the scripture is to be believed because God inspired it.

A similar argument can be made for passages in other holy books.

*"The man who accepts Scripture will readily acknowledge the existence of God.<sup>[1]</sup>"*

*"So, how can this problem of God's existence be resolved? [...] The Holy Quran (pronounced in two separate syllables Qur - an) is full of such evidence.<sup>[2]</sup>"*

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## Counterarguments

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*"Trying to prove God exists with the Bible is like trying to prove Superman exists with a comic book."*

— Robgene

In order for this argument to be [sound](#), one must demonstrate that the scripture is reliable. That is, one must show that if the Bible says something, then that statement is likely to be true.

- The Bible has been shown to be scientifically wrong. Geological evidence shows no trace of [Noah's flood](#), and that the human race (to say nothing of the earth) is far older than the 6,000-10,000 years predicted by adding up the ages of people in Biblical genealogies. Astronomical evidence shows that the sun does not revolve around the Earth, and that the Earth is not flat or that it ever has been flat which is contradictory to scripture.
- The Bible has been shown to be historically wrong. Exodus finds no historical backing. There's no archeological evidence that Jews were enslaved in Egypt or millions of people wandered the desert. There's no historical evidence of a large empire of David and Solomon. The nation of Israel appears to have begun as a more political movement out of the general Canaanite populations.
- The Bible contains contradictions between the four gospels (and other Bible books) that cast doubt on biblical reliability.
- The Bible contains forgeries. Many of the letters of "Paul" are [pseudepigrapha](#) (fake writing) and clearly not written by Paul. This includes the following line in 2 Timothy which says all of scripture is true, and which is generally recognized as a forgery:

- 2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.
- The Bible contains [failed prophecies](#): "2,000 years of 'any day now.'"

## Which God?

Main Article: [Which God?](#)

There are many religions and many of those have their own distinct holy texts.

There is no clear advantage of one scripture over another, so this is a [broken compass argument](#).

*"Should I believe that Jesus is my personal savior? Or should I believe that God made a covenant with the Jews requiring every Jew to keep the commandments of the Torah? Should I believe that Mohammad was Allah's last prophet and that Ali, the prophet's cousin and husband of his daughter Fatima, ought to have been the first caliph, or that Mohammad was Allah's last prophet and that Ali was the fourth and last caliph? Should I believe that the resurrected prophet Moroni dictated the Book of Mormon to Joseph Smith? Or that Ahura Mazda, the benevolent Creator, is at cosmic war with the malevolent Angra Mainyu? And on and on it goes. [3]"*

*"It is unfortunate that the creator of the universe wrote more than one holy book."*

— [Michael Shermer](#)<sup>[4]</sup>

## Scriptural Reliability

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Apologists argue that the scriptures are honest depictions of the originals: that the Bible was [copied very meticulously](#) and so we can be confident that what we have are not substantively different than the originals. Some apologists argue that the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm that the Biblical manuscripts vary very little. Others include stories of multiple independent translations which differed by only a few words. They generally argue that:

- The texts we have today are very similar to the originals.
- They were not changed much by editing or translation.
  - Therefore we can accept what they say as true.

The problems with this argument are many:

- The texts do vary greatly. The Dead Sea Scrolls are a prime example of how vastly different versions were.

- The translation and editing changed the works greatly over the years and religious texts are rife with theological disagreement, editing, and editing of editing.
- The conclusion and argument itself is entirely a [red herring](#): **Even a perfect copy of a work of fiction is still a work of fiction.**

## References

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1. [↑](#) [\[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) [\[2\]](#)
3. [↑](#) Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, [36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction](#), 2011
4. [↑](#) [\[3\]](#)

## See also

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- [Argument from historical sources](#)
- [Argument from scriptural inerrancy](#)
- [Scriptural scientific foreknowledge](#)
- [Argument from scriptural codes](#)
- [Christological argument](#)